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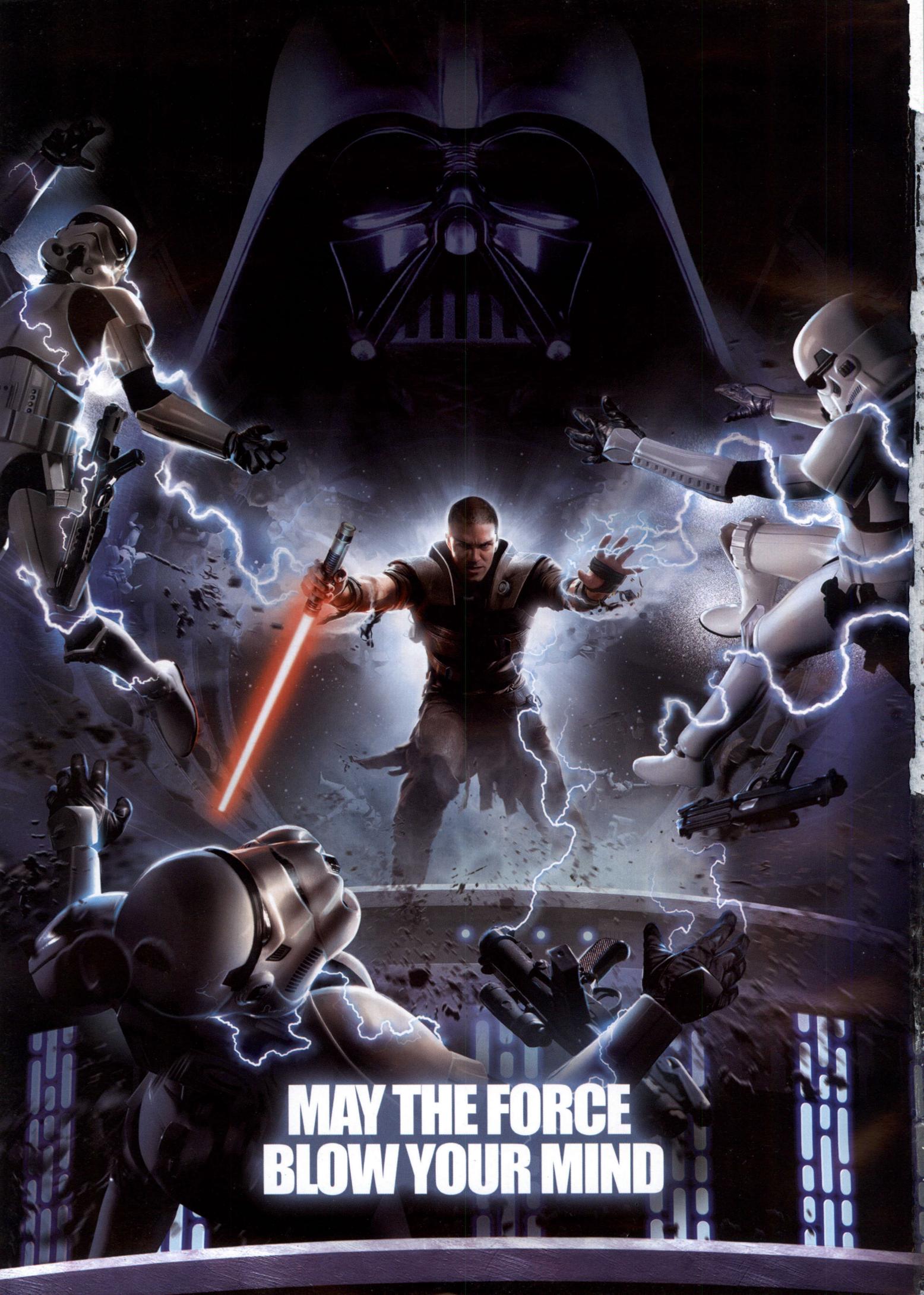


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Welcome



A few days before finishing this issue I received an email from an old friend.

"The new Killzone looks pretty smart," he wrote. "Can't see what the fuss is about with LittleBigPlanet, though. Create your own platforms? Big whoop." Oh man. Where to start?

After playing LittleBigPlanet everything else just seems so *limited*. The games I love are the ones that let you reshape them. Like constructing the perfect Master League team in PES, or the sense of possibility when looking at a blank slate in Soulcalibur IV's character creation mode. (Admittedly, a blank slate with huge knockers.) Well, LittleBigPlanet is that creative spirit times a million.

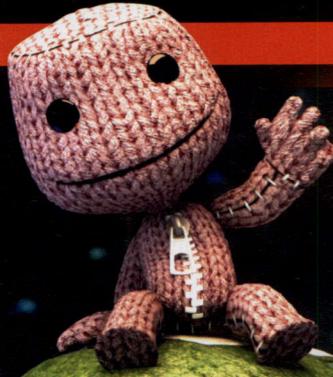
It works exactly like we were promised. And if you're too lazy to build your own stuff, or wait for what the online community comes up with, there's still a swathe of brilliant levels on the Blu-ray. You have to play it, and once you do you're going to want one of our limited-edition sackboy toys (see p90) to go with your exclusive Kratos download (see inserted voucher). Who'd have thought the future would be made out of burlap?

Tim Clark Editor
tim.clark@futurenet.co.uk

COVER REVIEW

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See page 90



92 LITTLE BIG PLANET

Hold onto your sackboys, it's our world-exclusive review of PS3's biggest game.

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Roll up your windows as we go on a PlayStation safari and meet man's insane country cousin.



80 OPERATION FLASHPOINT 2

The guys, guns and gadgets set to make COD4 feel about as realistic as LocoRoco.





100 PRO EVOLUTION SOCCER 2009

FIFA stunned our reviewer last issue – will our footballing first love measure up?

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Who we are...

Tim Clark Editor

Fell into the arms of new PES like a wife welcoming home a husband who had been missing at sea.

Game of the moment
Pro Evo 2009
LBP theme
Purgatory



Ben Wilson Deputy editor

Came back from the Leipzig Games Convention stuffed with news, rumour and hot German bratwurst.

Game of the moment
Pro Evo 2009
LBP theme
Back To The Future



Rachel Weber Agenda editor

Was sad to hear Fat Princess is actually a game and not the fashion trend for Autumn/Winter 2008.

Game of the moment
LittleBigPlanet
LBP theme
Gothic



Nathan Ditum Reviews editor

Abandoned his writing duties for something called a holiday. Productivity immediately doubled.

Game of the moment
LittleBigPlanet
LBP theme
Pastoral



Helen Woodey Operations editor

Helen's been a lone ranger lately, riding through the town of Bad Grammar on a horse called Spellcheck.

Game of the moment
Driver
LBP theme
Labyrinth

Write to the team at opm@futurenet.co.uk

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PLAYSTATION 3



Games for Windows LIVE

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On your disc



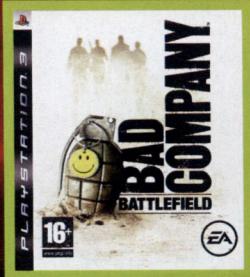
I've been slaving in the demo kitchen this month, and I've cooked up an astounding 28-course demo dinner, and every one is a delicacy. For starters I'll be serving up shooters like *Enemy Territory: Quake Wars*, *Battlefield: Bad Company*, *Haze* and *Lost Planet: Extreme Condition*. Sports fans can get their teeth into some tasty main dishes of *UEFA Euro 2008*, *Sega Superstars Tennis* and *Everybody's Golf World Tour*, plus *Race Driver Grid* comes with hot petrol on the side. And if your intestines haven't ruptured after all that, you can try something sweet, like a slice of *Lemmings* pie. Delicious.

Rachel Weber Agenda editor

Switch your PS3 on, find the Game icon on the XMB bar and then select 'OPSM - UK Blu-ray Demo 2008/24.'

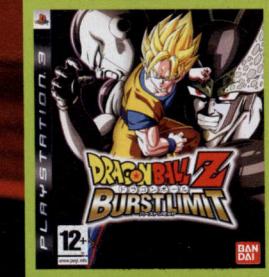


This month's exclusive highlights...



Battlefield: Bad Company

The shooter that wants you to forget the glory and go for gold, accompanied by a squad of chancers and misfits.



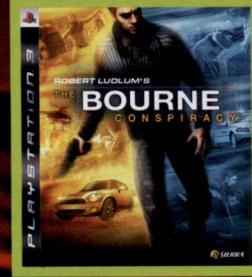
Dragonball Z: Burst Limit

Starring Goku, Raditz, Yamcha and a whole bunch of spirit balls, this is one-on-one fighting with an anime twist.



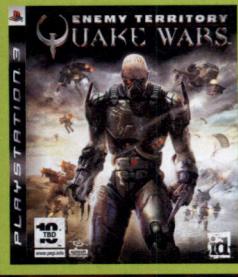
Guitar Hero Aerosmith

Sweet Emotion and Walk This Way makes this a must try for anyone who's ever glanced longingly at a unitard.



Robert Ludlum's The Bourne Conspiracy

Being a spy is about multitasking, so try shooting, assassination and a high speed car chase all in one demo.



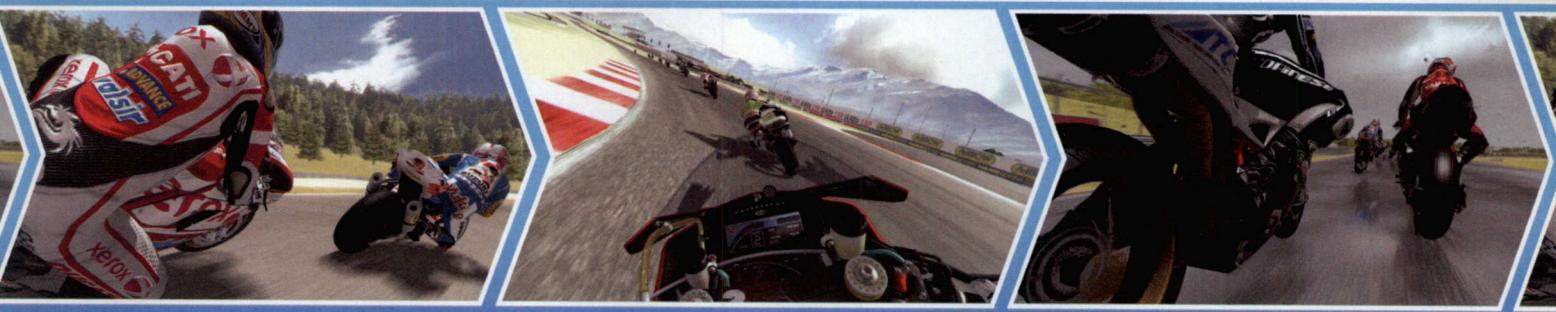
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Also on the disc this month *Haze*, *Race Driver Grid*, *Overlord: Raising Hell*, *Lost Planet: Extreme Condition*, *UEFA Euro 2008*, *Sega Superstars Tennis*, *Ratchet & Clank: Tools Of Destruction*, *Sega Rally*, *Burnout Paradise*, *Skate*, *Uncharted: Drake's Fortune*, *Devil May Cry 4*, *Pro Evolution Soccer 2008*, *Super Rub'a'Dub*, *Virtua Tennis 3*, *Lemmings*, *Everybody's Golf World Tour*, *Rampart*, *Blast Factor*, *The Simpsons Game*, *Heavenly Sword*, *MX Vs ATV Untamed*, *Stuntman: Ignition*.



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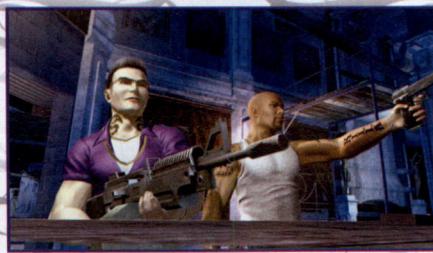
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Saints Row™

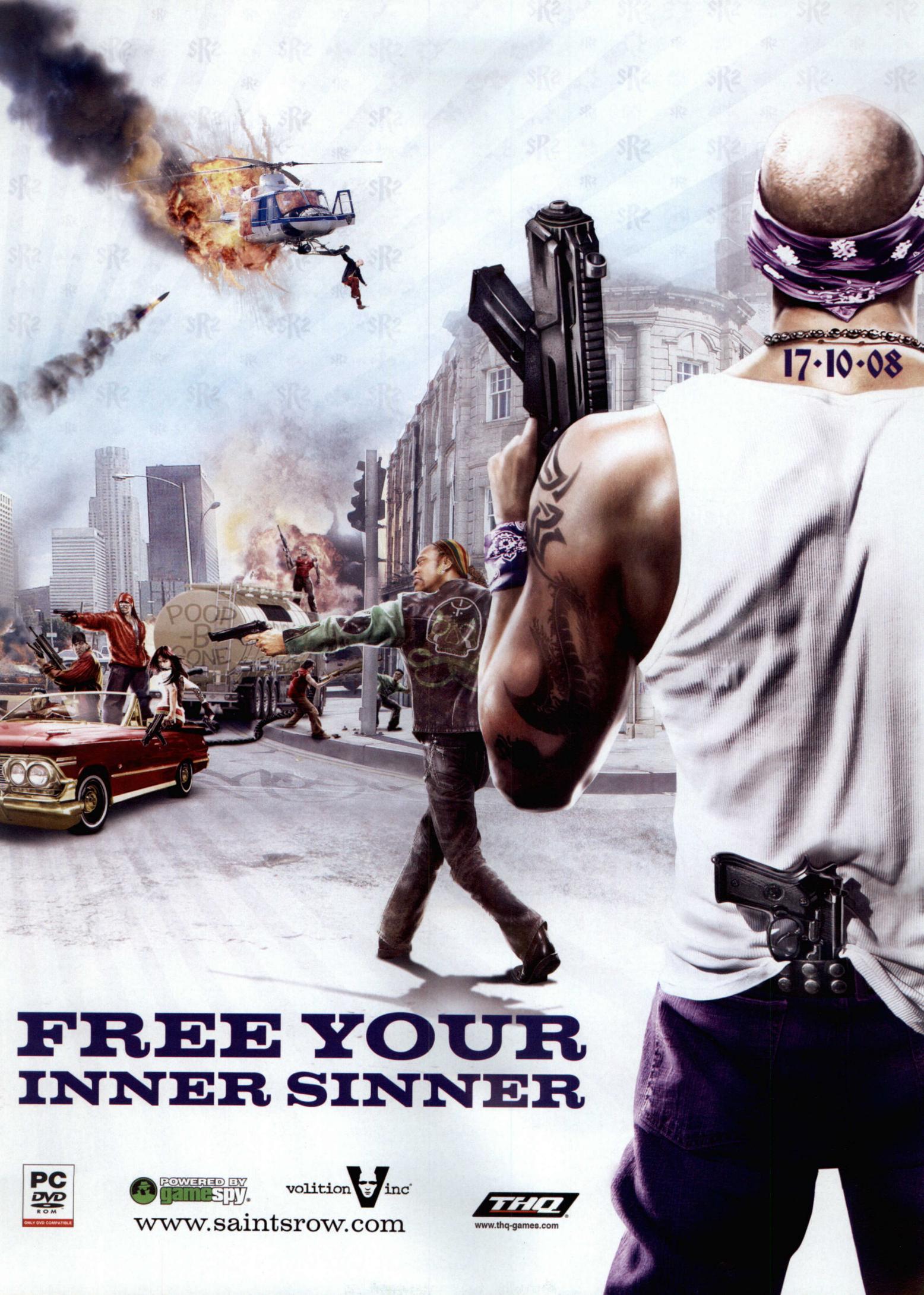


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Stories everyone's talking about...

New PSP and PS3

Brighter screen + bigger HDD.

► Page 14



Tamagotchi on your PS3

Sony reveals cute EyePet.

► Page 16



PlayTV is go!

We rate the new PS3 Freeview box from Sony.

► Page 18



SingStar party

Pretty girls sing for us.

► Page 20



Makin' maps

...using Far Cry 2.

► Page 24





1 "Resi 5 is not racist"

Producer defends decision to set new game in Africa

A few minutes – and polite questions – pass before anyone dares tackle the enormous zombie elephant in the room. So... how did Resident Evil 5 producer Masachika Kawata react to the accusation that the game's use of African villagers as monstrous enemies was inherently racist? "It was a little bit unfortunate," he explains calmly. "And we feel that it was a little bit unfair because we set the game in Africa and then obviously we had to make the indigenous people, and they happened to be black people. We don't take racism so lightly – it was just a coincidence. Nothing more."

We're talking to Kawata-san in



Dev bio

He's far from a household name, but Masachika Kawata has been at Capcom for 12 years, having started as an 'object designer' on *Mega Man 8* in 1996. This will be the fourth *Resi* he's worked on.

Germany at the Leipzig Games Convention, and he's not at all fazed by the line of questioning. Indeed, he seems relieved to put the record straight. In case the brouhaha passed you by, here's a recap: In the summer of 2007, Capcom unveiled a trailer for *Resi 5* which showed a fictional African village where the inhabitants had been turned into zombies and were trying to kill lead character Chris Redfield. Website Black Looks picked up on the fact that most of the enemies were black, Chris was white, and so a scandal was born.

Culture shock

Kawata-san admits that the reaction caught his team on the hop, and says that perhaps it's all down to cultural differences: "You can't please everybody, you know. Everyone's got different opinions. For us Japanese, we may be a little bit more naive in comparison to the Western people, because we've never had a history of

living with any other race as such. It was a lesson: that probably we have to be a bit more sensitive about the issues in the future."

One concession that the team did make was the addition of Sheva Alomar to the cast – a female sidekick to Redfield played by Michelle Van Der Water, who we interviewed last month. "We didn't make any modifications to the game itself as such because at the end of the day we didn't need to defend ourselves. However, I suppose we tried to appeal a little bit more with the second character – Sheva is mixed race." And he's keen to make the point that the baddies in the game are zombies, and therefore technically raceless. "One thing I would like to mention is that our format for enemies in this game is they're not like people," he says.

Resident Evil 5 will be released for PS3 on 13 March 2009. Hit residentevil.com for more info.

Sixaxis of Evil

In other *Resi 5* news, Capcom has hinted that the new game will feature a completely revamped control system, rumoured to borrow extensively from *Gears Of War* on Xbox 360. "Don't be surprised if at the Tokyo Game Show, the controls are different," says chief producer Jun Takeuchi. "I'm not confirming or denying anything, but we like to surprise people."



The Big 10

Stories everyone's talking about

1 PlayStation Portable 3000

Run the same game side-by-side on PSP Slim & Lite and 3000, and the new machine's picture is noticeably brighter and more colourful. The built-in mic encourages on-the-go Skype use.



3 160GB PS3

Gone super insane on the SingStore? Want your entire music collection stored in one handy place? The XXL PS3 model is just what Dr Games ordered.





2 Clip-on PS3 keypad

Ace for PSN messaging, with a toggle switch that enables you to slide your finger across the surface of the keypad, using it like a PC mouse. Should be ideal for strategy gaming and MMOs.

2 Sony's latest hardware innovations

160GB PS3! Brighter PSP screen! Clip-on keypad!

Yes, one hundred and sixty gigabytes. That's the whopping hard drive size on the latest PS3 model, which will retail at £339.99 and go on sale here in the UK from 31 October. It's astonishing value given that the RRP for the newly released 80GB model is £299, and the 160GB PS3 comes with a big chunk of downloadable content (final line-up TBC shortly).

Don't hang about before snapping one up though, because it won't be on sale for long. "The 160GB is a limited edition that we're doing to see how it goes in all the territories," SCEA president David Reeves says.

Handy changes

It wasn't Sony's only big unveiling at the recent Leipzig Games Convention.

A clip-on keypad for PS3's DualShock 3 controller, which will make messaging PSN mates even easier, hits before Christmas (price yet to be announced). And PSP 3000, adding a built-in mic (for Skype) and brighter screen arrives 17 October for £149.99, bundled with one of eight games.

Hit uk.playstation.com for more details on all of Sony's new products, including those mentioned here.



The Big 10

Stories everyone's talking about



Cowboy!



Monster!



Pilot!

3

Sony's PS3 pets

Our black, empty hearts have been melted by EyePet

Eye eye

Even with all the fuss over fancy new technology, Sony hasn't forgotten about its previous camera, PS2's EyeToy. It's releasing two new games in October, the cheerleader title EyeToy Play: Pompon Party and the sword-slashing adventure EyeToy Play: Hero. Both come with their own peripherals - a set of cheerleader pompons or a bright green foam sword.

You might be a deadly finisher on PES, or an expert at nailing COD4 head-shots from half a mile, but how are your tickling skills? You'll need them if you want to keep your EyePet happy.

The monkey-like monster is the latest piece of Sony software to use the PS3 Eye camera. He appears on your TV screen, and as the Eye motion-tracks your movements near him, like petting or clapping, he'll respond and interact. Remember the way you could poke and prod the magical creatures in Eye Of Judgment? It's the same sort of tech, but used in a far more complex way.

EyePet is much more than just a fuzzy 3D Tamagotchi. Not only will he play games and lie down to be stroked, he'll also recognise simple

objects like balls and interact with those too. And if you're the sort of person who makes their dog wear jumpers, you'll be happy to hear that EyePet comes with plenty of different looks - from tiger stripes to green fur, and interchangeable costumes. We predict a whole wardrobe appearing on the PlayStation Store and specific game-themed outfits. Make us a furry Ratchet please!

Top drawer

The most intriguing talent your EyePet has is transforming your doodles into physical objects on screen. Draw a simple shape on a piece of paper, hold it up to your PS3 Eye and your EyePet will copy the image with his magic crayon and

bring it to life on your TV. The trailer shows a wooden car that can be controlled with Sixaxis. Wonder if we can scribble our little pet something more fun... like a grenade launcher?

Don't make the mistake of thinking this is just kid's stuff, either. The EyePet might look cute and cuddly but he's also a testing ground for the motion-tracking software that Sony could use for bigger titles in the future. If the PS3 Eye can recognise more complex movements than the usual crazy hand waving then it could be used in shooters for actions like signalling squad mates. Today tickling, tomorrow ordering a swift retreat in Killzone 3.

EyePet is due out late next year. Until then see the little furball in action at snipurl.com/3mvaz.



▲ The kid draws a car, but where are the rims? The spoilers?



▲ EyePet copies it and adds some colour and a tree. Show off.



▲ A 3D car appears and, with it, the risk of EyePet roadkill.



4 Zombies in Vietnam!?

The undead rumble in the jungle with *Shellshock 2: Blood Trails*

Finally, the sequel no one actually asked for is here. The original *Shellshock*, from Killzone developer Guerrilla Games, was a clunky shooter of questionable taste set in the Vietnam war. For the follow-up, new dev Rebellion has had a *big* rethink, filling the Mekong Delta with zombies. Colour us more interested.

Full mental jacket

So why such a huge shift in style? Producer Jonathan Eardley says the mashup occurred because, "We're big fans of not just the horror of war, but the horror genre in general." The game begins after a secret cargo, codename White Knight, crashes in the jungle. Predictably the rescue mission goes bumm and, less predictably, unleashes zombie hell. Both Romero-style shufflers and 28 Days Later sprinters are planned. Eardley says, "The infected need more force to stop than regular enemies. You have to meet them head on and place your shots." Is it too late to burn our draft card?

We'll have a hands-on with *Shellshock 2* in next month's issue, on sale 28 October.

G.I. No!



017

Brainy?



▲ In *Shellshock 2* it's 'Good Moaning Vietnam' as Vietcong and GIs alike get infected when a military transport plane spills its mysterious cargo.





The Big 10

Stories everyone's talking about

PlayTV™



Guide

PlayTV's Electronic Programming Guide (EPG) is clean, stylish and very user-friendly.



Settings

You'll find everything from the parental lock to subtitles options behind this icon.



Library

Head here to manage all the recordings on your hard drive and search for specific items.



Manual

Confused about any of PlayTV's functionality? All the info you need is right here.



Not sure when and where a series you want to record is on? Search here using keywords.

5

Testing PS3 TV

We tune into Sony's new Freeview add-on

On Freeview

PlayTV delivers the full selection of Freeview channels currently available, obviously dependent on the reception in your local area. Highlights include Sky Sports News, bringing you all the latest updates on your favourite sports 24/7, Dave - home of classic Beeb shows like *Never Mind The Buzzcocks* and *Only Fools And Horses* - and E4 and Film4, the brilliant sister channels to Channel 4. Visit freeview.co.uk/channels for a downloadable PDF guide.

The first thing everyone says when they pick up the PlayTV hardware is, "Oooh, isn't it light?" But its lack of weight is no surprise when you consider that this small black box contains little more than a pair of TV tuners: all of the clever stuff is handled by your PS3 once you've installed the PlayTV software from the disc provided.

Upon start-up, you choose your region, attach the PlayTV hardware to your PS3, and scan for available channels. So far, so expected. But towards the end of the process the system warns you that, if you want to use PlayTV's recording function while simultaneously playing PS3 games or

watching Blu-ray discs or DVDs, it 'may affect gameplay or the quality of recording'. We tried the option with 14 different games, old and new, but experienced no discernible drops in performance. If there are hitches, then, we've yet to encounter them.

State of Play

The main PlayTV menu presents seven options: 'Live TV' (the most commonly used feature, enabling you to watch the box straight away), 'Settings' (including parental lock, subtitles, and so on), 'Manual' (explaining controller functions, etc), 'Guide' (AKA Electronic Programming Guide or EPG), 'Schedule' (manage

your upcoming recordings), 'Find and Record' (search for programmes via keywords) and 'Library' (search your recordings for a specific item). Everything, from top to bottom, is presented in a silkily slick manner - the subtle fade-out and fade-in as you flip between channels, for example, is a tiny but sophisticated evolution over the basic flip seen with other digiboxes - and it immediately feels like a natural extension of the PS3's ever-expanding feature set. Control, meanwhile, whether via Sixaxis or PS3 multimedia remote, is smooth and user-friendly.

What are PlayTV's best bits, beyond its expected PVR (Personal Video





Recorder) abilities? Remote Play compatibility, enabling you to access PlayTV's functionality from a WiFi-connected PSP; the ability to export recorded programmes to the PS3 XMB's Video section (which then enables you to export them off the console as MPEG2 files); and the image-quality advantages you get from using PS3's HDMI connectivity over most other PVRs' inferior SCART connections.

On the down side, with 30 minutes of recording commonly stacking up to around a gigabyte of PS3's precious disc space, it may not be long before you feel obliged to splash out on a heftier hard drive for your machine. As excuses for upgrades go, though, PlayTV is the most convincing one we've seen yet.

PlayTV is available now at £69.99. For more details on the service head to snipurl.com/3ky0l.

What's in the box?

A penny shy of £70 gets you the PlayTV hardware, a USB cable and a Blu-ray containing the software you need to get started. Plug your TV aerial into the hardware, connect the box to your PS3 using the USB cable, install the software and you're ready to go.



Up-close and personal

PlayTV's twin Freeview tuners enable you to pause live TV (simple as pressing **REC**), and record one channel while watching another, (or even while playing games). It's simple to navigate too. The Sixaxis pad's right stick lets you preview channels in the EPG, and find out what you're watching now and what's on the current channel next. **PS** and **PS**, meanwhile, change channels with a sexy little fade effect.

6 PS3 VS MTV

Vidzone turns your PS3 into a music video jukebox



■ Most of Vidzone's music video-streaming services are free of charge.

Plugging your iPod into your PS3 is one thing, but to really appreciate the musical genius that is Katy Perry pretending to like women, you need to be able to watch the video. (She strokes a cat! Suggestive!) With Sony bringing existing free service Vidzone to PS3 next year, you'll be able to stream and watch music videos from a catalogue of thousands in-between gaming sessions.

Better still, you'll be able to organise your favourite tracks into playlists and watch them remotely on your PSP. In addition, Vidzone's extra services will be available for a charge, such as downloading tracks to your mobile phone.

Sing stars

So far there's been no official announcement about which artists you can expect to see on Vidzone, but the existing online service already features big name artists like Madonna, Biffy Clyro and Usher. When you consider that the Sony family includes the Sony BMG record label (with artists from Beyoncé to The Ting Tings on the books) it should ensure a constant supply of quality tunes to watch.

Vidzone will come to PS3 early next year, and, not content with inking this deal, Sony is planning its own film and music download service. Talking after the Leipzig Game Conference SCEE's president David Reeves explained, "We're very comfortable working with them (Vidzone) on a streaming service, but it doesn't mean the download service in the future will be Vidzone. It might be a Sony service." Whether Sony goes solo or makes a deal with a rental outfit like LoveFilm, it could be time to upgrade your hard drive.



020



PlayStation Official Magazine UK

The Big 10

Stories everyone's talking about



Sexy girls!



Rock gods!



Huge hair!

7

SingStar's community service

Sony throws free party for karaoke super fans

Sing-along

The SingStar community is one of the big hits on the PlayStation Network, with more than 200,000 members and 50,000 videos uploaded to date. Sony recruited party guests from the SingStar UK MP Lounge, an open-to-everyone fan group on Facebook where you can see more photos of the event. Want in next time? Join up. With Disney and Queen editions on the way, it'll be your chance to dress up as Freddie Mercury or The Little Mermaid without getting sectioned.

We didn't believe Sony at first. "Come on. The entire SingStar community can't be this good looking. You've hired some models, right?" Wrong! Sony really did invite SingStar fans to a VIP sing-along in the heart of London. The event was a launch party for the forthcoming SingStar Boybands Vs Girlbands, and was also a thank you to the community that's been uploading embarrassing videos to My SingStar Online for nearly a year now. "I've come all the way from

Kent," explained one young lady in a cowboy hat. "My favourite is probably the Gossip, although I do Depeche Mode's Enjoy The Silence if I really need to win. And why isn't Bohemian Rhapsody in it yet?" "I bought a PS3 just for SingStar," admits another girl.

All together now

Most people gravitated to the PS3 pods to croon through the hundreds of downloadable songs, but there was a big uptake of Boybands Vs Girlbands

too – Five's Everybody Get Up and Mis-Teeq's One Night Stand being clear favourites. After our tear-jerking rendition of Total Eclipse Of The Heart, OPM belted out Queen's Don't Stop Me Now, prompting half a dozen people to join in, many of them staying for a post-song victory hug. Sick of swear-y idiots on COD4? Take note: the SingStar community is much friendlier. And prettier.

SingStar Boybands Vs Girlbands is out in November. Go to singstar-game.com for more info.



The Big 10

Stories everyone's talking about

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PS3's goriest game

Dead Space banned in several countries... or is it?

Banned in the UK

Even if the rumours of Dead Space's multinational ban turn out to be true, there's still very little chance it'll be censored in the UK. The last game threatened with such action was *Manhunt 2*, which was eventually cleared for release when publisher Rockstar successfully challenged the BBFC's initial refusal of classification. That was back in March, so where's the game now? We contacted Rockstar, who confirmed it still supports the game fully, but has not finalised a release date. Don't bet against it turning up before Christmas...

A rumour recently pinged around the internet that EA's forthcoming sci-fi shocker *Dead Space* had been banned in China, Japan and Germany. The weird thing? The rumour seemed to have emerged from within EA itself, with widespread suspicion that it might simply be a marketing ploy. (An EA rep told us they were 'not aware' of any action against the game.)

Whatever the exact truth of it, we do know that if *Dead Space* does end up banned by some of the world's queasier censorship authorities, it won't be a massive surprise. From what we've played it's shaping up to

be the bloodiest, meatiest game on PS3 so far, a festival of spouting severed limbs, murderous space babies and hollow-eyed corpses floating eerily through zero gravity.

Silent scream

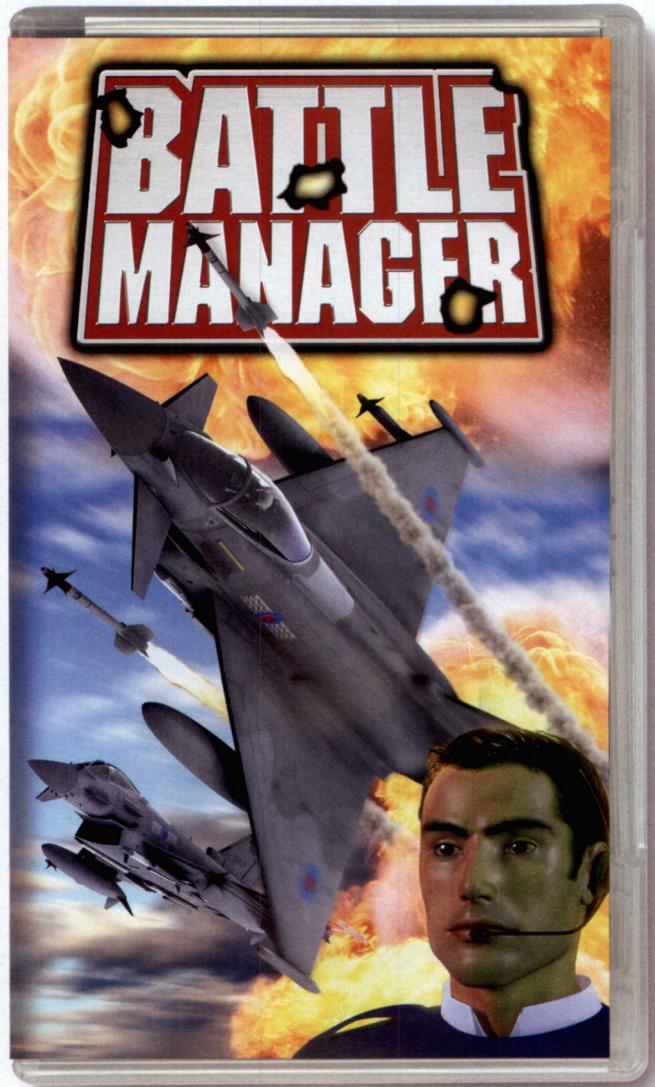
It is a massive surprise that an edgy, adult-themed game like *Dead Space* is associated with a commercial giant like EA, who traditionally goes after mainstream audiences. But producer Richard Briggs tells us that EA has backed his development team all the way. "It was supported from day one, and that was really liberating," he

explains. "EA wanted to get into the survival horror genre and our executive producer, Glen Schofield – his vision was just full of gore and violence. [To have] EA basically not say no to anything has been great."

Along with the announcement of a collaboration with *Resident Evil* creator Shinji Mikami (which he talks about on p76), these are definite signs that EA is getting into horror in a big way. The world's biggest publisher taking grown-up games seriously? It can only be good news.

EA's *Dead Space* – due for release on 24 October – will be reviewed in next month's issue of OPM.





This is not a game.

Make believe is for kids. The RAF do it for real. Air Traffic Controllers (ATCs) and Fighter Controllers are the eyes and ears of the RAF's defence capability. ATCs are responsible for the movement and deployment of all military and civilian aircraft around airbases and for the necessary ground organisation to allow aircrew to carry out missions. Fighter Controllers use the latest high-tech equipment to place combat aircraft in the right part of the sky at exactly the right time. Both jobs require you to make important split-second decisions that will affect the lives of your pilots, your fellow crew, your enemy and the public. Now there are no high scores. Only high stakes. Start here.

Text BATTLE followed by your email address to 88RAF (88723)
rafcareers.com





9

Far Cry 2's designer destruction

Build your own multiplayer maps - then torch them

Choose your own adventure

Far Cry 2's single-player game casts you as a mercenary hired to kill an arms dealer in an African state torn apart by civil war. You're free to explore and tackle objectives in any order, but there's actually an incredibly innovative mechanism that lines up missions based on who you meet or attack. You won't notice it happening, but the story is carefully tailored on the fly to keep things interesting by including enemies you have a history with, rather than ones you've never met.

Admit it: you secretly call yourself Daddy Deathmatch and reckon you've already got the mad level-editing skillz to design your own multiplayer levels. Well, Far Cry 2's map editor gives you the chance to back up the big words by enabling you to build your own killing fields, and then post them online for people to enjoy. Think LittleBigPlanet, only with AK-47s, Jeeps and vast, burning forests.

One we made earlier

Unlike previous console map editors that see you slotting pre-formed tiles into ready-made environments, FC2

offers enormous scope. Using the cursor you can pull mountains out of the ground just by hitting **X**, carve rivers into the soil or add swathes of vegetation to build lush jungle settings. It's all completely free-form, enabling you to guide the cursor around like God's own paintbrush as you layer incredible depth and detail into your creation.

You can also cherry pick from thousands of 'off the shelf' objects to add trees, cars, buildings, barrels, bridges and so on. There are fancy environmental effects too, like the sun blooming through the leaves, or

stormy winds. Plus you can shoot branches off the trees and start fires that propagate through the bush, just like in the single-player mode. In fact, the visual quality we've seen so far looks indistinguishable from the main game - featuring everything from African shanty villages to construction sites. Ubisoft has even recreated a huge chunk of Paris to demonstrate just how versatile the toolset is. We're already working on our first level. It's called 'Enemy team spawns screaming in forest fire'.

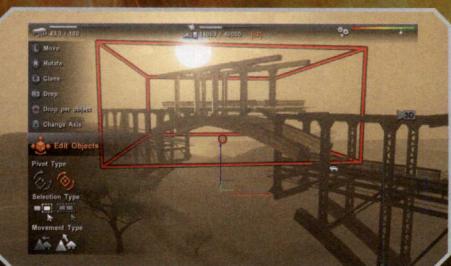
Want to see the Far Cry 2 map editor in action? Then head on over to snipurl.com/3mlqa.



The radial menu lets you quickly select objects.



A dense tropical forest takes just seconds to create.



You can add anything from tiny plants to huge bridges.





10

Will you be collecting PS3 Trophies?

Our men squabble over the PS3 silverware

Yes

Says our resident glory hound and prize hunter **Leon Hurley**



Trophies simply add extra variety to a game you'll be playing anyway. They'll test your skills in different ways and extend a game's lifespan – for me, collecting them is a no brainer. Look at *Grand Theft Auto IV*. There are hundreds of little stats and accomplishments that have absolutely no influence on Niko's progress. I bet most of you still spent ages trying to break your longest wheelie record, or 'stars evaded' rating though, didn't you? At least with Trophies you'll have something to show for your efforts. Trophies merely represent why we play games: for a sense of achievement, accomplishment, success – we all play to win, after all.

Easy money

Dip into the XMB while you're playing and the Trophies are all there, neatly listed. You can just take a look, pick one and go. Getting 'Ten head shots' or 'Collecting 20 treasures' is not going to be a chore in *Uncharted*, for example. And trickier objectives – *Pixeljunk Eden* I am staring directly at you here – are just more valuable. When I finally get my hands on that 'Open all seeds in garden' Trophy in *Eden* there will be a party. A small party, admittedly. One where I'm the only guest and the popping of champagne corks is replaced with the cracking open of a solitary can of lager. But in my head it'll be New Year's Eve in Times Square.

Think you'll spend weeks trying for every Trophy going? Then email 'YES' to opm@futurenet.co.uk.

No

Says normally competitive editor with slowing reflexes **Tim Clark**



Every now and then I have a nightmare in which I'm called back to University to sit an 18th century French literature exam I missed. I patiently explain that I have a job now, quite like it, and they can stick the degree. Then my clothes fall off and the screaming starts.

The point is, these days I'm done with being graded, scored and, erm, measured. Maybe that's why I don't see Trophies as an index of success, but of failure. (And I don't need another one of those.) For all the Trophies I *might* be able to win, all I can focus on are the thousands I won't. Essentially the ones that require more effort than not dying during the tutorial. Truth is, I've never cared much about high scores or [cough] achievements – I just want to see what a game has to offer, then move on. Like the littlest hobo. But for games.

Pointless prizes

I have precisely zero interest in replaying the same section of a game over and over, trying to eke out a virtual backslap from a designer who created an arbitrary set of goals on his lunchbreak. If there was some inherent value to Trophies – imagine if having a certain amount of them got you access to pre-release betas, for instance – then I'd maybe get involved. But until there's some discernible reward for collecting them, I won't be competing for pretend-o-points.

■ *Uncharted: Drake's Fortune* is full of Trophies to collect. But will you bother?

Think Trophies are nothing more than a waste of time? Email opm@futurenet.co.uk, subject line: NO.



65
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Blu-ray Disc™

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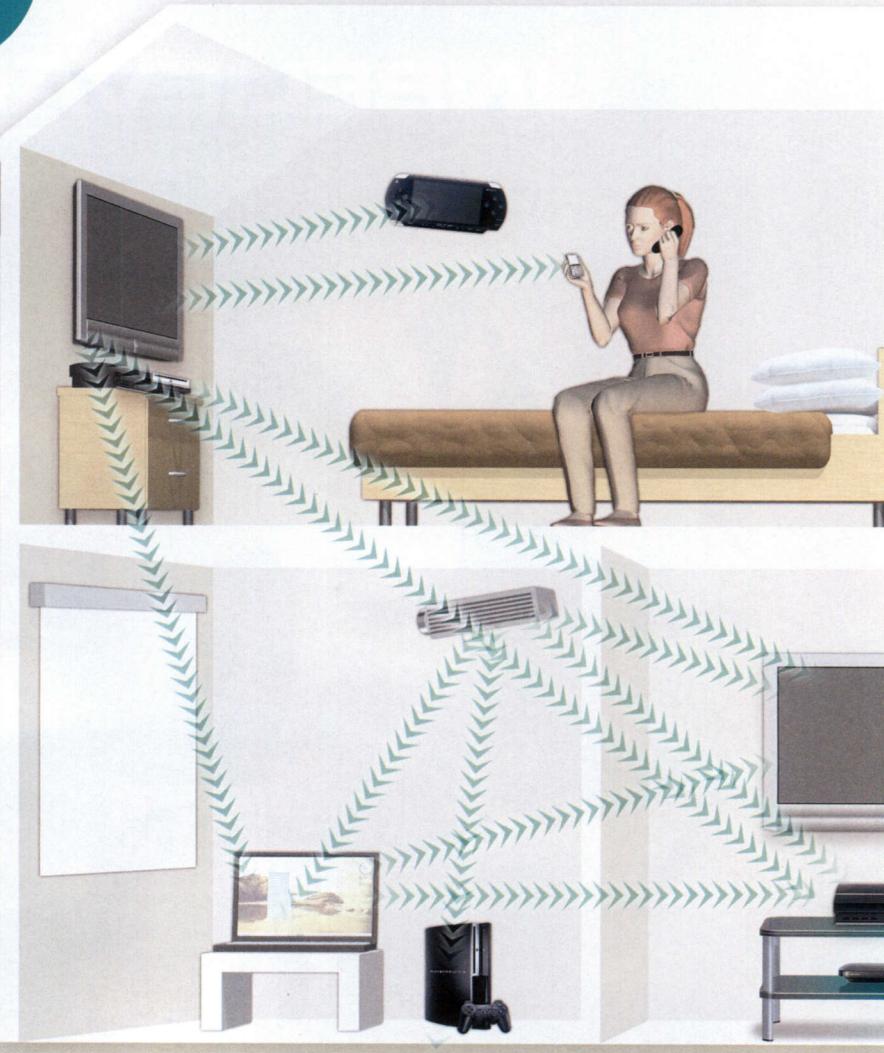
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Beam PS3 all over the house

We investigate the tech that will turn your house into a wireless high-definition hub

If it's anything like ours, your home is a mess of gold-plated, magnetically-shielded, oxygen-free cabling. Each morning we have to rescue small animals that have strayed in and got trapped by a rogue S-video lead. But not for much longer. Tech firm Amimon's new Wireless Home Digital Interface, will enable you to send high-def video all over the house from a single source. It transmits a 1080p signal from your Blu-ray player or PS3 but, instead of compressing the video, it calculates which parts of the picture are most important,

like bright colours contrasted against dark, and prioritises them. It sounds like a recipe for fuzzy grey patches and early adoptor tears, but on its website Amimon promises picture quality equivalent to a wired setup. "The new standard will ensure that when consumers purchase consumer electronic devices and take them home, they will enjoy a fast, easy and hassle-free wireless connection that delivers the highest quality," said Dr Yoav Nissan-Cohen, CEO of Amimon.

Obviously, at the moment they're talking



RUMOUR MACHINE

Insider whispers



Belkin Flywire
This pricey little WHDI transmitter beams to small receivers that plug into your HDTVs.
Price: \$999

up the ability to watch hi-def movies in any room in the house (assuming you have an abundance of HDTVs) but we're most excited about the idea of playing PS3 in multiple rooms. The Belkin Flywire uses Amimon tech (currently available to pre-order for a wallet bleeding \$999) and promises 1080p video throughout your home, with no latency when it comes to gaming. This presupposes you're within the pad's 30ft range, of course, but it still means you can finish watching *There Will Be Blood* on Blu-ray while lounging in bed without first having to move all your kit around.

Video stars

It looks as though the big names will be backing it too. Sony, Hitachi, Motorola, Samsung, Sharp and Amimon have formed the WHDI Special Interest Group to promote

and develop the new technology, and set a standard for quality by the end of the year. With such major corporations investing their time and money, we're guessing that we can expect to see their HDTVs coming with the WHDI receivers built in as standard in a few years' time.

The technology isn't just for PS3 owners either; it'll work with any video format, resolution or standard, including 1080i, 1080p, 720p, PAL, NTSC and PC, so even that obscure Japanese horror you spent three nights downloading can be played on every TV you own. Of course, you'll need to have a receiver for every extra HDTV you want to feed video to, and coupled with the initially high cost of the tech that could make it a very expensive package for early adopters when WHDI rolls out at the end of the year.

The PS3 2.5 firmware will come with a screen-grab function so you can send game images to friends.



Who wants to be the Daddy? The as yet still unannounced *Bioshock 2* will have a multiplayer mode.

The team at Rockstar Games responsible for the PSP version of *The Warriors* is working on *Max Payne 3*.



EA will publish the ex-Vivendi project, Jack Black's *Brütal Legend*.

Pandemic's rumoured sandbox-style Batman game has been cancelled due to reasons of rubbishness.



Like your gore in bite-sized chunks? The sequel to zombie basher *Dead Rising* will be episodic.

Sci-fi shooter *Crysis* will be coming to PS3 in 2009, and it'll bring a whole load of new content with it.



Male model

Barbie, meet Chris Redfield

The steely eyes, the lantern jaw, the thick, lustrous plastic hair... yes, it could only be zombie hunter extraordinaire and star of Resident Evil 5, Chris Redfield. He's the latest model to roll off the production line of John Mallamas, serial action figure customiser.

Mallamas, known online as Jin Saotome, used a GI Joe body, parts from Gundam figures and synthetic clay to craft his tiny tribute. "The hair was the toughest part, but choosing the right head to start was crucial," he told us. "I suppose you could say he has a good head on his shoulders. Hah!"

So is he a Resi fan? "Do zombies like brains? Heck yes! I remember playing the first one in the dark, jumping at every noise!" He's been getting requests for Chris and Jill figures since he started videogame-themed projects, and was inspired by the new Resi. "I'm stoked to see how Capcom continues the series, and how the storyline works out."



Chiselled jaw
Modeler Mallamas told us, "Since the customs are based on an animated likeness, I'm pretty free to work with the features."

Plastic surgeon

Meet the maker

John Mallamas started painting GI Joes with nail polish when he was five years old, now he sells his customised action figures on Ebay (under the alias Jin Saotome) for hundreds of dollars. A recent Iron Man custom figure sold for over \$1,000. (Again: we picked the wrong job.) Keep up to date with his auctions at angelfire.com/mech/jinsaotome.



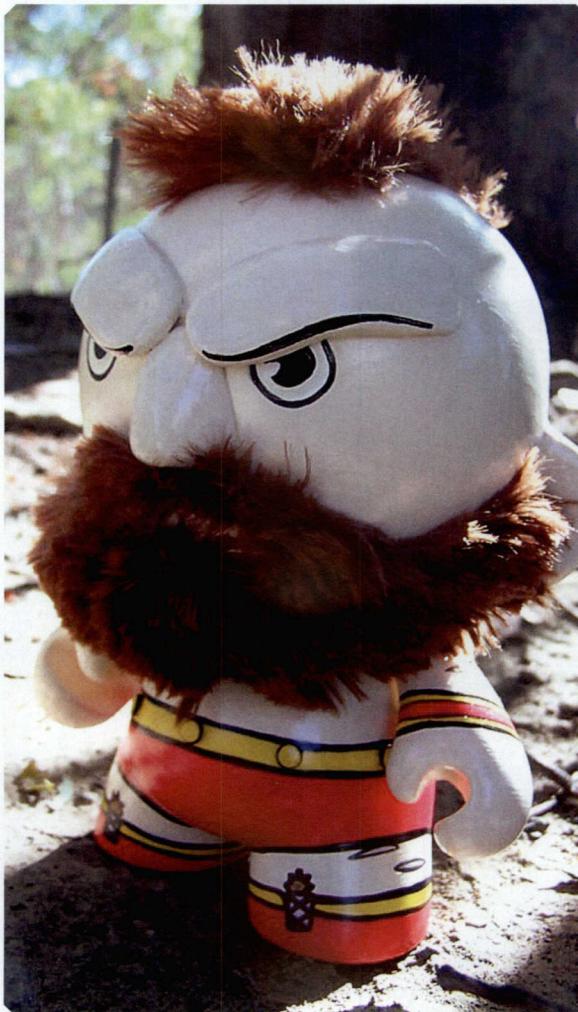
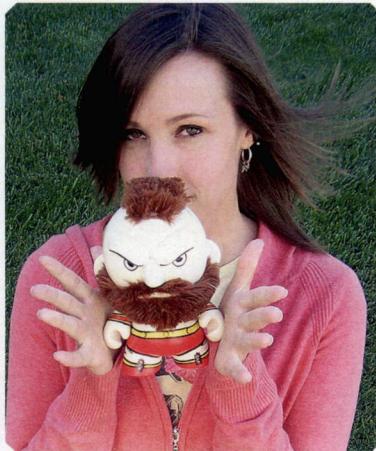
From Russia with love

Big heart makes little Zangief

Some girls buy their boyfriends CDs, maybe a T-shirt, but for her man Shelby Goad made this Street Fighter munny. "I was trying to get him into collecting toys with me. I had to promise to make him anything he wanted," explained Goad. "I still owe him a mini Gorbachev."

Munnies are small plastic figures designed to be customised, and game-themed creations are growing in popularity. Goad, who works for EA in California, used polymer clay to shape Zangief's eyes and nose and then boiled him until it was set. Adding the hair turned out to be the hardest part. "Who knew that brown fur would be so hard to find?" Goad said. "We ended up buying a stuffed bear and using the fur from his legs." Absolutely chilling. We don't want to know where the rest of Teddy is.

■ Munny maker Shelby Goad and Zangief.



■ For her next project Goad is planning to decapitate a munny to make her own King Boo from the Super Mario Bros series.

OPM HOT TOPIC

Who would you hate to be stuck in a lift with?



Loz Doyle
Producer,
Travellers Tales

"Despite being one of my favourite game characters, it's Kratos. Any polite conversation would end with the Chains Of Olympus around your neck."



David Polfeldt
Vice president, Massive Entertainment

"That annoying little advisor from Okami, Issun! When I played the game I hated it after three seconds. Imagine having to listen to him for hours on end."



John Garcia-Shelton
Producer, Spark Unlimited

"Steroid rage-filled battle armour guy. Take your pick from which game, there are plenty of them. I mean, what are we going to talk about? How many skulls he's crushed?"



Dylan Cuthbert
President, Q Games

"Being stuck in a lift with any game character would be a unique experience. However, if it's a person in a costume, then the scariest I can imagine is Krystal from StarFox."

WHO SAID THAT? V.I.P. quotes

"Better than getting f*cked by a goblin up the arse with a laser."

Gallagher
Snr talks
Guitar Hero.



"Beautiful... like a Lynch or Romero type of horror." Director **Guillermo del Toro** hearts Silent Hill.

Rush Hour director **Brett Ratner** admits "I would love to do a Guitar Hero movie!" Eh?



"50-50 right now." Valve's **Doug Lombardi** gives us reasonable odds, and some hope, that we'll eventually get Left 4 Dead on PS3.



Why I play FIFA with my son

Nathan Ditum isn't schooling his boy on PES

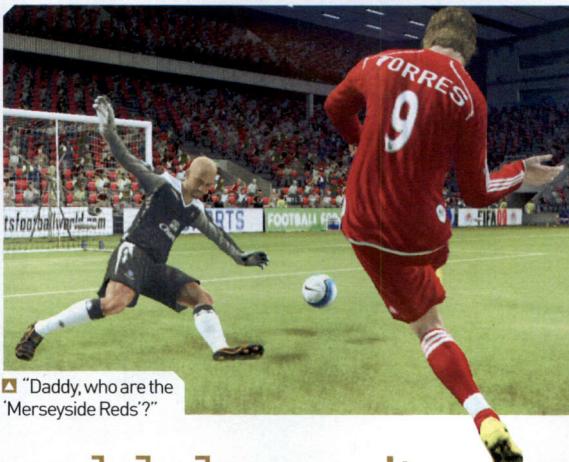
The first thing that goes through your mind when you hear you're going to be a father? It's not how to decorate a nursery, or what name you should choose, or even whether your unborn offspring might one day develop incredible superpowers (in my experience, that comes a close second). No – the first thing that crosses your mind is 'I hope he doesn't get bullied at school'.

So I came up with a solution. I thought back to my time at school. Me: scruffy haired, fantasy-reading nerd. And yet I was never troubled by bullying. The reason? Football. I understood football. I played football – I played football with the kids who normally would've asked me repeatedly why I didn't have a real hairstyle until I cried, and then made me eat my Tolkien hardback.

The answer, then, was obvious. As soon as he was out of baby grows, I bought my son, Jay, an England strip. I paid for Sky Sports

Liverpool, where are Liverpool? 'Liverpool are called Merseyside Red on here, Jay. Hey, where are you going?'

He wasn't having any of it. So we tried FIFA 08. We scored it a six last year – play it now and you can still see why: it's sluggish and full of gameplay shortcuts. But – and this is key – Jay didn't care. For him, playing was all about wish-



“Daddy, who are the ‘Merseyside Reds’?”

“A six-year-old doesn’t care about refined wing play.”

and made him sit through three live Premier League fixtures a weekend, and woke up early to catch the Match Of The Day repeats on Sunday morning. I bought a goal for the back garden, and matching big and teeny goalie gloves for the pair of us. I paid an impossible sum of money to complete the World Cup 2006 Panini sticker album (I still have over 600 swaps – anyone interested?). And I brought home PES.

Theatre of dreams

I love PES. Like all other right-minded PlayStation footy fans, I've always looked generously past the whole kits and badges problem and enjoyed the superior game Konami's series played. What I hadn't counted on was the fact that I had by this point turned Jay into some weird infant footballing savant, and he was much less forgiving. 'Daddy, I want to be

fulfilment, about being Torres or Keane and sticking one away at the home end in a fully licensed Wembley while the Premier League commentary tells him how good his goal was, and much less about nuts and bolts gameplay.

Finding this out answered a question I'd been blinkeredly furious about for years – how could people decide that shiny kits and team names were more important than how good the game was? It's because a six-year-old doesn't really care about the intricacies of the through ball system (so long as I keep feeding him passes to score, anyway) or whether the wing play is more refined than last year. Whereas before I'd always sort of resented EA for gobbling up the licences and winning on looks, now I can see the genuine enjoyment value they bring, and as long as that's what my boy wants to play, that's where my loyalties will lie.

MY GUILTY PLEASURE



Paul Fitzpatrick can't refuse **Mafia's** rubbish cars

The generally-not-crap Mafia's attention to detail is both its genius and its downfall. Alongside the 1930s hoodlums in chalk-stripe suits it features cars that nail the laughable experience of driving 78-year-old jalopies. I'll never forget the first time I buttonholed a stool pigeon and sprinted for my getaway car only to 'speed' away at a top speed of... 37mph. I almost got out and jogged away from the cops to get some distance between us. After a while, I adapted to Mafia's glacially paced motors and by the time I stole myself a racing car capable of nudging 93mph I felt like I was jumping into hyperspace. Daft as Fredo Corleone, but it still makes me laugh.





Phonofone II iPod Dock

Hark back to a more genteel time by playing the blistering new Mogwai LP through this retro iPod dock. "What's that... I can't hear you... the gramophone's on."

£250

charlesandmarie.com



KumoTek KT-X Robot

With 17 flexible joints this little guy can run, flip, dance and even pull martial arts moves. Think Short Circuit meets American Ninja.

£600

kumotek.com



Madcatz Rock Band Kit

Madcatz has a wide range of Harmonix-approved peripherals, of which our favourite is this cheery skull-themed case for your little plastic axe.

£14

amazon.com

Hysek Colosso Watch

Just sold a four-bedroomed house and looking to hide the cash from the taxman? Splash out on this shiny but absurdly-priced timepiece.

£300,000

hysek.com

Want that

Lust-have kit for
PlayStation people

Dead Fred Zombie Chaser

Intimidate your new neighbours with this remote-controlled screaming zombie corpse.

£1,440

frightcatalog.com



Prices and availability of products are all correct at time of going to press



Sony XEL-1 OLED TV

Meet the 'organic' size zero TV that's welcome on our runway anytime

£975
sony.co.uk

In a nutshell

Right now, this is the absolute slicing edge of TV tech. Pedants will argue the XEL-1 isn't *truly* hi-def, but that's irrelevant given that its 960x540 pixels are crammed into a little 11" screen that's only 3mm thick and shines like a newborn star. The slim design, and frankly astonishing picture quality, is all thanks to the new OLED (organic light emitting diode) panel – which doesn't use the chunky backlighting that makes LCD and plasma sets so thick.

What's so special?

Despite being skinnier than Keira Knightley after a dodgy lamb bhuna, the OLED can display much brighter and richer images than a normal LCD screen. At a claimed 500,000:1, the contrast ratio can guarantee bright colour and rich, inky blacks, and lightning response times mean it's perfect for watching high speed motor sports or pummelling Mitsurugi in Soulcalibur IV. And as an added bonus it uses less electricity, so you can help save the world while you're watching There Will Be Blood. Again.

Tell me more...

The screen sits on a swivel arm, so you can adjust its angle for perfect Blu-ray viewing. At the moment the TV is only available in Japan and selected US stores, but it should be making its way over to the UK sometime this year. Meanwhile Sony is already working on its next generation [read: much bigger] range of OLED displays, which are about as thick as a piece of tracing paper – and just as flexible.

The facts

500,000:1 contrast ratio
3mm thick
11-inch display
45W power consumption

Back / side

OLED works by passing an electrical current through a layer of organic compounds, which causes the pixels to directly emit light. The fact that some of the pixels can be turned off means OLED TVs can reproduce real blacks.



Screen

This is the world's first commercially available OLED set, but it already has better contrast, brightness and light, and colour reproduction than any other conventional TV.

PLAYSTATION TOP 10 CHARTS

This month's heroes and zeroes

▲ Up ▼ Down ● Non mover + New entry

PS3

1		Mercenaries 2 World In Flames
2		Tiger Woods PGA Tour 09
3		Beijing 2008
4		Call Of Duty 4 Modern Warfare
5		Metal Gear Solid 4 Guns Of The Patriots
6		Grand Theft Auto IV
7		Soulcalibur IV
8		Battlefield Bad Company
9		Race Driver Grid
10		Guitar Hero III LOR

Source chart-track.co.uk

PS2

1		Tiger Woods PGA Tour 09
2		Mercenaries 2 World In Flames
3		Lego Indiana Jones The Original Adventures
4		Guitar Hero III LOR
5		Wall-E
6		Kung Fu Panda
7		The Mummy: Tomb Of The Dragon Emperor
8		The Incredible Hulk
9		Guitar Hero Aerosmith
10		MX Vs ATV Untamed

Source chart-track.co.uk

PSP

1		Tiger Woods PGA Tour 09
2		Crisis Core FFVII
3		Lego Indiana Jones The Original Adventures
4		Wall-E
5		God Of War Chains Of Olympus
6		International Athletics
7		Secret Agent Clank
8		Star Wars Battlefront RS
9		SBK 08
10		MX Vs ATV Untamed

Source chart-track.co.uk



The PlayStation entertainment plan

Never spend a moment unfulfilled with our monthly guide

Monday



Tuesday

SEP 30

Issue 24 on sale
And you've bought it - right move, friend. Send your emails about which bits you liked the most to opm@futurenet.co.uk



Wednesday

OCT 01

I'm not lovely
Stevie Wonder, the grand master of motown, brings his mouth organ of peace to the O2 Arena. theo2.co.uk

Thursday



Friday



Saturday

04

Roman holiday
See if Abramovich's boys can send down The Villans as Chelsea take on Aston Villa in the Barclays Premier League. premierleague.com

Sunday



20

Online banking
Virtual Worlds London is the place to go if you want to talk cyber cash, Second Life and emoticon-only sex. virtualworldslondon.com



14

Hi-def gridiron
Still up? Tune into Sky Sports HD1 at 1.30am to see reigning NFL champs the New York Giants face the Cleveland Browns. skysports.com/nfl



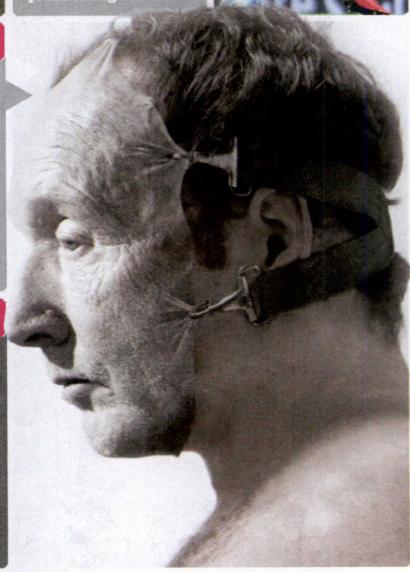
23

Young lovers
Enjoy the very best of the Mystery Jets and marvel at the delicately styled indie haircuts at London's Astoria. mysteryjets.com



24

See saw
Main villain dead? Hey, no probs. Just strap his face on someone else. This counts as character development in the world of Saw V. saw5.com



28

October
Issue 25 on sale. Subscribe now on page 90

Over and over
Electro pop pixies Hot Chip fill the Carling Academy with their perky sound. hotchip.co.uk



31

Win a projector!
Dead Space is released on PS3 - play it on a new Sony projector for giganto-scares! deadspace.3a.com





Win a Sony Projector

Turn your lounge into a private cinema

It's time to do your Blu-rays justice with a top-of-the-range Sony home cinema projector. The VPL-VW40 delivers 1080p hi-def images with deep blacks and colour fidelity that's rich like Man City. It also rocks a speedy response time of 2.5 milliseconds – perfect for playing this month's big PS3 release, the dark and bloody Dead Space. We're giving one away courtesy of Sony – all you need to do is be in with a chance of winning it by correctly answering this question:



In which Sony game does the character sackboy star?

A MANHUNT2 **B** LITTLEBIGPLANET **C** RESIDENTEVIL4

Text using the word Sony followed by a space, then your answer A, B or C followed by a space, then your name and address to 87474, or enter at futurecomps.co.uk/opm24sony. Winners will be picked at random from all correct entries. Closing date 28.10.08

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FIVE MINUTE SKIVE

Games to play when the boss isn't looking



Gigolo Assassin

A point and click adventure in which you have to find a pet for a pirate, make a waiter vomit and pretend that a coconut is a monkey's head – all while wearing a tiny thong. Great, here come the night terrors again.

snipurl.com/3kn0c



RPS-25

You already know that rock blunts scissors, and scissors cut paper, but did you know tree traps devil, or water drowns dragon? This is complicated rock, paper, scissors, for the Dungeons and Dragons crowd.

snipurl.com/3kn0x



The Great Bathroom Escape

When we get stuck in the WC it's usually because of an over ambitious curry, and not a huge amount of fun – but then we don't have helpful insects or homemade saws to help us out.

snipurl.com/3kn1c



FIVE YEARS AGO IN OPM

This month we visit OPS2 #39

Attack! The cover was invaded by a dead-eyed and emotionless marine in celebration of our exclusive **Medal Of Honor: Rising Sun** review. He was probably shell-shocked or something – or maybe just really pleased that his game scored a big fat 9/10 inside, and not quite sure what to say.

News kicked off with an exclusive reveal of details about the ill-fated **Driver 3** (these being the days before some idiot in marketing – Toby? Again? – redubbed the game **Driv3r**). There was also a dissection of the new **Metal Gear Solid 3** trailer, and a first look at **Transformers: Armada**. Oh, and a tiny mention of how a WW2 shooter was on its way to PS2 – some PC thing called **Call Of Duty**. It'll never work.

Leading the way in previews was Activision's remodelled skater **Tony Hawk's Underground** ('It's going to be absolutely brilliant', we cautiously predicted) followed by **SSX3** ('Prettier than the first snowstorm of winter') and **Worms 3D**, which was a relative disappointment, being 'the first Worms game that hasn't hooked us in a social life-destroying mantrap'.

Reviews started early, thanks to the fact that we were so excited about **Pro Evolution Soccer 3**, we gave it a feature all to itself entitled 'The Cult Of PES', which was five pages of fanatic zealotry followed by the number '10'. It turned out to be a very strong month – there was another 9/10 for **Jak II**; **Renegade** ('An epic treat'), and an 8/10 for **Everquest Online Adventures** ('Perhaps the purest role-playing opportunity in gamedom'). The wooden spoon went to **Road Rage 3**. 'God knows what kind of state the first two versions were in,' we pondered, before scoring it a ruthless 1/10.





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BUT DESTINY CHOOSES A HERO

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2008



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SANDALS, SWORDS AND HOT SPURTING BLOOD"

OFFICIAL PLAYSTATION MAG



WWW.CODEMASTERS.COM/ARGONAUTS



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Preview

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CALL OF DUTY: WORLD AT WAR

Disappointed by the WW2 U-turn? Us too, so we sent our man to play it. He says "The guns are brilliant and it's *real* mean".



PlayStation® Official Magazine - UK Previews

039

Latest info on Planet PlayStation's hottest games

With Christmas looming like a tinsel-bedecked Kraken, it's a predictably busy preview section this month. There's the return of the genre-dominating Call Of Duty series, two games featuring the Dark Knight (Bruce is so hot right now) and three PSN titles, offering everything from force-feeding a minor member of royalty to high-speed flower arranging. Plus we've got not one but *three* Final Fantasy XIII games, and an update on Heavy Rain, arguably the most interesting exclusive that's currently on Sony's development books.

It's proof of the sheer depth of the PS3 catalogue that we're able pick and choose what games to cover based purely on finding the most interesting ideas or exciting executions. And of course every month more games are announced – like Fuel, on page 56 – which twist established genres into new shapes. An exciting time then, and with 2009 already looking like an absolute monster, this is the place to get the good stuff first.



46

HEAVY RAIN

Part game, part movie, Quantic Dream's hugely ambitious PS3 exclusive includes a serial killer who stuffs his lady victims. And that's just one of the 'bonus' scenes.



48

BATMAN ARKHAM ASYLUM

Based on Grant Morrison's classic graphic novel, this sees Bats prowling a rioting madhouse, tackling his biggest enemies.



58

FINAL FANTASY XIII

The latest on all three (deep breath) Fabula Nova Crystallis Final Fantasy XIII games on PlayStation. Fresh screens, info on the new battle system, and a pretty girl's armpit.





Preview



040



PlayStation Official Magazine UK



Quick pitch

Grandad's army

World At War returns to the series' WW2 roots, abandoning the contemporary setting of COD4.

What a lovely war

But it feels just like Infinity Ward's classic, with an intensity to the gunplay and a sharp story.

Back in the USSR

As well as the Pacific setting, the game has a parallel mission running from Stalingrad to the fall of Berlin.

Classic series Format PS3 ETA November Pub Activision Dev Treyarch

Call Of Duty World At War

Ⓐ Old ⓒ Is ⓓ New ⓔ Again

Alright, so now we're excited. All the fuss and worry surrounding the new Call Of Duty – can developer Treyarch match Infinity Ward's incredible COD4? Is WW2 done as a setting? Will the half-century-old guns pack enough bang? – fell away as soon as we actually played the thing. It works – partly because Treyarch has been careful to preserve and expand on the quality that COD4 brought to the series, and partly because, from the levels we've seen, they've squeezed urgent, brutal drama out of what most had considered a creatively exhausted period of history.

What really made COD4 outstanding were the boundary-shunting narrative risks: making you live the last moments of a doomed Middle Eastern president; killing a main character in a

nuke attack; that massively emotional ending. World At War responds in kind, opening with your Marine, Private Miller, bound and kneeling in a remote Japanese POW camp and watching on as a fellow captive is tortured. Not only does the prisoner refuse to talk, but he also sprays a plume of bloody spit in the face of his interrogator, who responds by taking a long drag on his cigarette and stubbing it out in your comrade's eye. There's a splat on the wall as a second guard slashes the guy's throat, then moves slowly towards you. 'They wouldn't, they wouldn't', you automatically think, before remembering they *did* in the last game. But then the guard's face distorts and he slumps forward to reveal Sgt Roscoe, pulling his knife out of the dying man's kidney.

Dev talk



"The mantra for the whole thing is that this is WW2 like you've never seen it before. It's a war that tends to get sanitised a little bit... creatively. World At War takes on an edgier tone." **Mark Lamia**, Studio head, Treyarch





Preview



► Turns out flamethrowers are as much fun as you'd expect. Hey, hey – put the matches down.

"You wake up in a ruined fountain stacked with Russian corpses."

So it's grim, then, but it's got that same hard edge COD4 had. It's not innovating in the same way, but then, over the course of COD's evolution that's never been Treyarch's job – it's always played support act to Infinity Ward, the series' creator. And just because Treyarch's not making sweeping changes to the core game it doesn't mean the quality is any lower. At one point the action shifts from the Pacific to Europe, in the aftermath of the Nazis' bombardment of Stalingrad,

and the intro matches any moment of drama you care to pick from COD4. You wake slowly in a ruined fountain stacked with Russian corpses, the screen fading from black to blinding white as you blink into consciousness. A Carrion Crow suddenly flutters into the sky, where it's lost among waves of German bombers. Choral music floats over their droning engines as a Nazi fires into stirring bodies and you lie dead still, praying that he doesn't notice you.

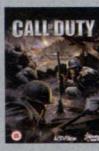
► One big lesson in World At War is don't invade Russia, they get *real* cross.

Beyond the storytelling and presentation, the really good news is that WAW plays just as smoothly and sharply as COD4. It's clearly using the same underlying tech. So whether it's used to recreate a tropical island jungle or the rubble-and-fire of a shelled city, World At War's shadows, lighting and detail have the same solid physicality that its predecessor had. More importantly, it doesn't feel like you're losing out, despite regressing through 50 years of gun tech. Yes, some of the bolt-action rifles are frustrating to use, but they all pack a satisfying pop and some of the machine guns – such as the Soviet PPSh-41 – spit bullets thunderously loud and lightning fast.



Timeline Call Of Duty's highs and lows

INSPIRED



Call of Duty
(PC, 2003)
Infinity Ward's
Medal Of Honor-
humbling
series opener.



Call of Duty:
Finest Hour
(PS2, 2004)
First console
spin-off, by dev
for hire Spark.

Call of Duty 2:
Big Red One
(PS2, 2005)
A decent first
outing for WAW
dev Treyarch...

Call of Duty 3
(PS2, 2007)
...before making
good work of this
solid but rushed
next-gen debut.



Call of Duty 4:
Modern Warfare
(PS3, 2007)
Original dev Infinity
Ward returns to
show everyone
how it's done.

Still lethal

Crucially, the savage lethality of the weapons is still there – shoot a man and he instantly dies in a wet splash of red. And WAW is even meaner at times, like when it gives you a flamethrower to take out some sandbagged gun positions. The first time we toasted one we went inside to find the three-man gun crew reduced to delirious crawling cinders – then we carried on

2003

TIMELINE

2007





1 Shooting guns in an inflatable boat has always seemed like a terrible idea, but then maybe we're just terrible shots.



2 Japanese snipers tie themselves to trees and wait for ages to be shot.



3 Developer Treyarch has thrown in extra vehicle levels to up the ante on Call Of Duty 4.



043

using the ol' toasty to clear the corridor and trenches beyond. Honestly, why would you ever *not* use a flamethrower? [Other than because you're a Geneva Convention signatory.]

It all makes World At War feel more like a companion piece to Modern Warfare than a full sequel (it's no coincidence that the '5' has gone from the title). It might not be a huge step forwards for the series, but it looks set to uphold the high standards set by COD4, and that's something no other shooter has managed in the year since it was released. Think about it this way: if someone asked you if you wanted to play a huge COD4 expansion set in a lush-looking, big-fisted World War Two, what would you say? Thought so.



5 good reasons Why World At War is better than you think

1 Guns work

Our biggest fear was that WW2-era guns would be weak after COD4's flash widow makers. Not so; they pack a massive, deadly punch.

2 WW2 is hot again

Screaming, bayonet raised, the grim ruins of Stalingrad – we thought we were done with WW2. We were wrong.

3 Stats in co-op

Co-op in itself is good news, but co-op in which you can build up your multiplayer XP to unlock new guns and perks is a must-play.

4 Burning things

COD4 was brilliant, but didn't let you set enemies on fire, which World At War definitely does, with the flamethrower and Molotov cocktails.

5 Perfect presentation

The menus are identical to COD4's and pre-mission loading screens have the same zooming animation.





Preview



Classic series Format PS3 ETA November Pub Midway Dev Midway



Mortal Kombat vs DC Universe

Ⓐ Why ⓒ So Ⓝ Serious Ⓞ Batman?

Concerned that the inclusion of superheroes might reduce the traditional MK diet of gore, gore and, for you sir, an extra side order of gore? Don't be. Beheadings and dismemberings are out – after all, who wants to hack Superman's head off? (Don't answer that, Lex.) But! There's still plenty of blood spurting from Midway's eighth Mortal Kombat game.

Perhaps the best example of this is

the Joker's fatality, available once you've pounded your foe enough to earn the famous 'finish him' prompt. Joker marches up to his opponent, whips out a handgun, and pulls the trigger. A red flag with the word 'BANG' flops from the barrel. Your opponent looks relieved, at least they do until Joker pulls out a second, very real, gun and blows their brains out. Comedy and carnage – this is very

much Mortal Kombat like mama always used to make.

His fatality isn't the only reason why Joker's the most fun character right now. His move list is ridiculously over the top: his distance attack is a super-powerful boxing glove on a spring, and his ↓↘○ move is a green cloud of mist – enabling him to kick, pistol whip, slide or bomb (!) his opponent without them knowing what's coming. Batman

5 big questions All you need to know about MK vs DC Universe

1

What modes are there?

A story mode played from either the MK or DC perspective, and an arcade mode where you can play anyone vs anyone.

2

Where can I fight?

We've done battle in traditional MK environments like a graveyard and 'Hell', as well as the Batcave and DC's Metropolis.

3

How many characters?

Around 20 – half MK, half DC. Newly confirmed are Wonder Woman, Deathstroke, Raiden, and Kano, plus DLC.

4

Does it support Trophies?

Absolutely. Expect them for finishing the story modes, unlocking characters and winning a set number of matches.

5

Will there be a sequel?

Yes, if it sells well. Although the team will be focusing on the next standalone Mortal Kombat game for PS3 first.



Can't Wait To Play...



Industry insiders reveal their PS3 faves
Marc Domowicz
Programmer, Mercenaries 2

Dead Space



"It looks fantastic. I didn't go to E3 but I was watching it online and it looks great. It strikes me as a similar concept to System Shock, which I'm a huge fan of. I like the space horror concept."



Resident Evil 5

"I played Resident Evil 4 a couple of times but 5 looks fantastic. The co-op looks really cool. I really like the system where you can swap weapons when you're next to each other - it's really intuitive but no other games have done that yet."

Gran Turismo 5



"I ate up Gran Turismo 1 and 2 and then didn't really get into 3 or 4 on PS2. So I've been away from GT for a bit and I'm looking forward to getting back into it. I'm imagining that it's going to play exactly the same as numbers 1 and 2 but that'll be great."

Dev talk



"All of this had to make sense. We structured a story that makes sense with all the characters. That was the fun part about writing it - that we can make this work."

Jimmy Palmiotti
Writer, DC Comics



Contrary to initial reports, you can bloody up the superhero characters. Have it, Supes!



Crushing your foe with a green wall: stupid yet awesome.



The Green Lantern also appears in DC Universe Online - but not as a playable character. 1-0 to the Midway boys.



is also a riot, his powerful throws and scissor attack - where he slides along the floor and wraps his legs around an opponent to trip them, slamming their face into the ground - making him the perfect character for newbies.

Big comeback

It's clear that Midway is looking to entice new fans to MK by upping its accessibility. For instance, along with your health bar you now have a yellow rage meter that builds up as you take damage. Once full you can activate 'rage mode' by tapping **L1** and **R1**, making your character glow yellow and become invincible for about six seconds. So even if you're up against an expert and taking a kicking, you'll

always have one last shot at victory.

MK traditionalists might not be so keen on a feature that gives weak opponents a way back, and it remains to be seen whether mashing the two universes together will really work. We're happy to report, though, that the likes of Sub-Zero, Scorpion and Liu Kang [more characters will be available as downloads] have the majority of their moves intact, and it still feels like the MK you know and possibly quite like. So you could always put your fingers in your ears and pretend the DC lot don't exist. And if you're still not happy, we can reveal that the team is already working on the ninth Mortal Kombat game, for PS3, and it will be a standalone MK title.





Preview



Quick pitch

Total control

Heavy Rain is designed to feel like an interactive movie with you in the director's chair.

Play god

There are 60+ interactive scenarios where you shape the outcome, deciding who lives and dies.

Replay value

Since your actions constantly reshape the story, it's impossible to see the entire game first time though.

Keep a lookout

Most objects in Heavy Rain can be interacted with, although these windows only come into play during a cut-scene when our heroine looks out to see her target coming home.



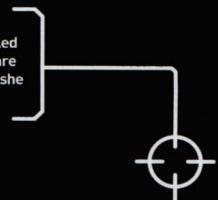
Morbid fascination

You think these are mannequins? Nope. They're dead girls, stuffed by a sick serial killer taxidermist. Go into the bathroom and there's a body laid out in the claret-flooded tub. Gross.



Meet Madison

The heroine in this level is a journalist called Madison. Her reactions and movements are incredibly realistic, right down to the way she wiggles her backside as she walks.



PS3 exclusive Format PS3 ETA 2009 Pub Sony Dev Quantic Dream

Heavy Rain

Ⓐ Shoulder ⓒ Buttons Ⓝ Emotion ⓔ Control

Heady Rain's watchword is 'immersion' – in that you should not only feel in control, but like you're actually *in the game*.

Sounds pretentious, right? It is, but that won't matter if it works. Cleverly, you never have to worry about the camera. You use ⓒ to walk forwards, and the right stick to move your head, which then also changes the direction of your character, with the perspective shifting automatically. Face buttons decide the outcome of real time events

– such as pressing Ⓚ quickly to prevent a bottle falling off a table you've just knocked into – but the onus is on using the sticks and Sixaxis.

Shake your thing

That's right – reversing the current trend, Heavy Rain makes full use of the pad's motion sensors. In the level we played, where a female journalist explores a serial killer taxidermist's house, it has two main functions. The first is to interact with objects – going

up to a window and shaking the pad to prise it open, for example.

The second use is more intriguing: Ⓛ brings up a small Sixaxis menu with options for how you want to *think*. So, outside the killer's house, we tilt the pad to select 'Caution' – "I can't just break into a man's house" – or 'Daring' – "I could have a quick look inside". Hard to say if it's more than window dressing or the choices really shape your personality, but it's more evidence of this game's huge promise.





Preview

Quick pitch

Violence

Survival within the walls of Arkham depends on stealth, cunning and a brutal combo system.

Brains

Solve puzzles with X-Ray kit, fingerprint trackers and other Bat-gadgets.

Terror

Arkham Asylum is a Gothic institution on an island that you're free to roam in search of missions.

048

Hype Magnet Format PS3 ETA 2009 Pub Eidos Dev Rocksteady Studios

Batman Arkham Asylum

△ Batarangs ◉ Capes ◉ Stealth ◉ Lunacy

Having seen the box office-pulverising movie, you might think the Dark Knight couldn't get any, well, darker. But Arkham Asylum is inspired by Grant Morrison's nightmarish graphic novel – one of the bleakest entries in the Batman canon. It's a free-roaming actioner that pits Gotham's saviour against his old foes – including The Joker, who's triggered a nuthouse riot. Enter the Bat.

Living hell

It's in the shadows that Batman is most dangerous. From high on a ledge he can spy on bad guys using gadgets

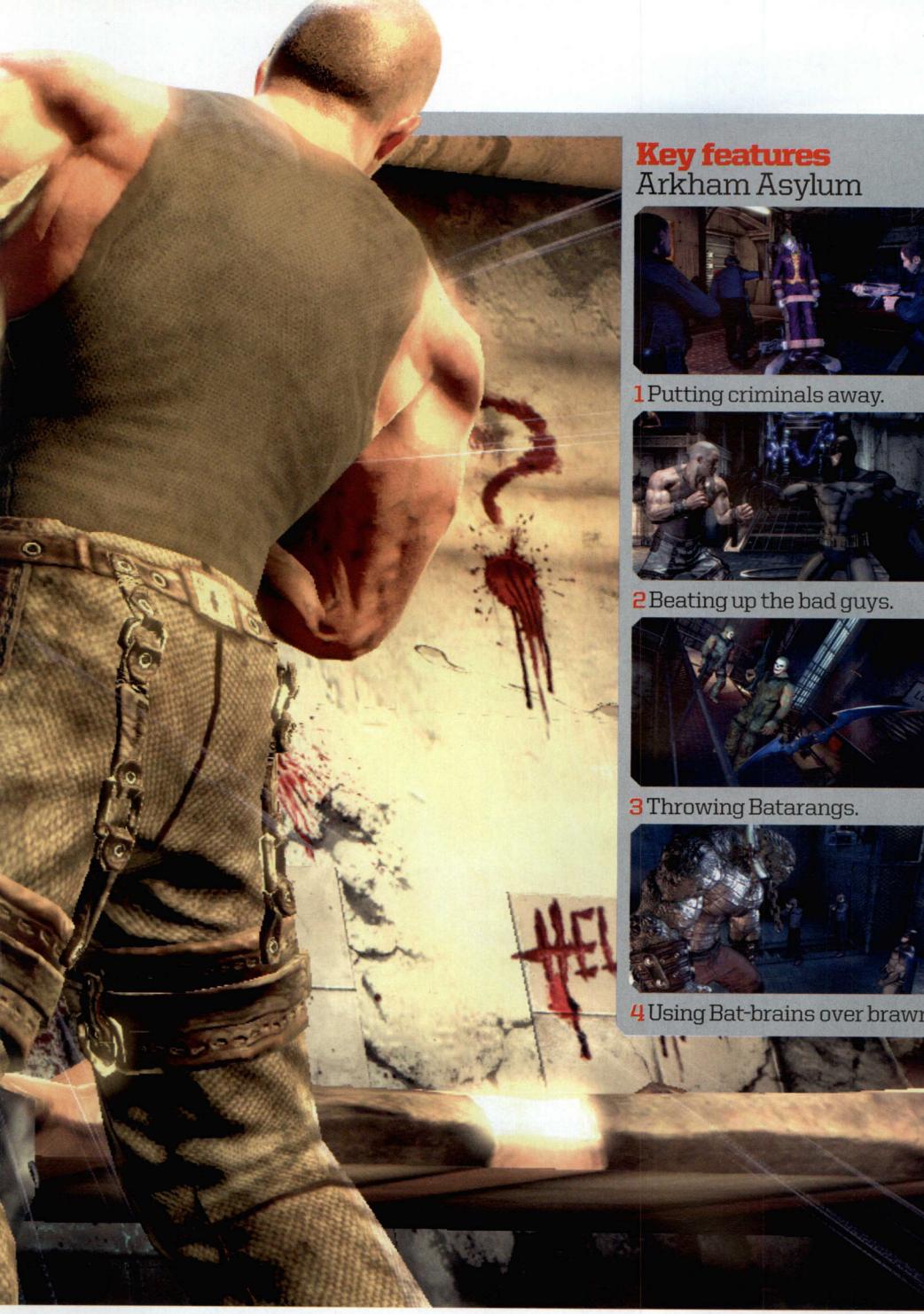
like an X-Ray visor to see who's packing heat, before leaping in to surprise them. Three buttons – attack, stun, and throw – keep combat simple but brutal. Arkham is being made by the developers of Urban Chaos: Riot Response, a game subtle enough to boast 'persistent blood-staining' as a key feature. So expect plenty of pain.

Batman fills a combo meter when ploughing through hordes of enemies which powers up attacks and boosts experience points. These can be used to unlock new moves and toys – like Batarangs which are steered from a first-person view when thrown. You

also get a CSI-style investigation kit, so you'll be able to scan for prints or break out the black light to track a maniac's blood trail.

It's fitting that a game starring the world's grimmest hero trapped in the world's nastiest institution looks like a conflicted one – part stealth and survival, part button-thwacking bloodbath and part crime scene investigation. But while the developer is better known for crass ultraviolence, the brilliant premise and moody good looks – plus the fact that we're so hot for Bats right now – mean our hopes remain perched high for this one.





Key features Arkham Asylum



1 Putting criminals away.



2 Beating up the bad guys.



3 Throwing Batarangs.



4 Using Bat-brains over brawn.

Could Be A Contender

Rag Doll Kung Fu Fists Of Plastic



This one sounds like it's going to be a winner

The premise

A fast arcade PSN beat-'em-up where up to four players whoop each other's asses.

The reality

Think Super Smash Bros Brawl but replace Nintendo's iconic cast with customisable plastic action figures.

The hook

Combat uses a mixture of analogue controls, Sixaxis and rag doll physics to create stretchy, bouncy fighting.

The Inspiration

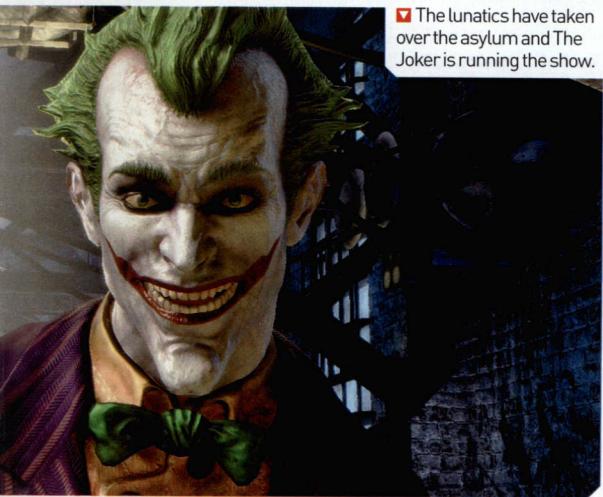
Rag Doll Kung Fu, a PC game that used mouse moves to drag fighters around.



The chances

LittleBigPlanet dev, Media Molecule, created the brilliant original. Hopefully Tarsier Studios, which is developing this, can capture that magic.

Format PS3 ETA 2009 Pub Sony Dev Tarsier Studios



✓ The lunatics have taken over the asylum and The Joker is running the show.

Source Amazon.co.uk

Pre-Orders The punters' top three



FIFA 09

The one with all the licences is back, and now features massively improved gameplay and ten versus ten online matches. Best though, is the now multi-season Be A Pro mode.

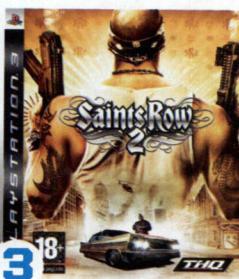
Format PS3 ETA 3 Oct Pub EA



Fallout 3

Dystopian RPG/shooter hybrid from the creators of Oblivion. Wander a post-apocalyptic world braining mutants, searching for your dad and hanging out with your pet pooch.

Format PS3 ETA 24 Oct Pub Bethesda



Saints Row 2

GTA IV's idiot brother is going for pure comedy over serious criminality. Battle gangs and the cops in your bid to rule the streets of Stillwater while customising your character, cribs and cars.

Format PS3 ETA 17 Oct Pub THQ





26th ANNUAL GOLDEN JOYSTICK AWARDS

What's *your* game of the year?



Is COD4 better than MGS4? Have your say at the Golden Joysticks

Who'd win in a fight – Call Of Duty 4's Captain Price, Metal Gear Solid 4's Solid Snake or a really drunk bear? Now you can decide. The Golden Joystick Awards – together with Virgin Media – are coming, and it's your votes that determine who wins what, including the ultimate honour: the Virgin Media Ultimate Game Of The Year. (Scans nominations. What, no bears at all?) Voting is simple. Just head over to goldenjoystick.com and choose from the shortlist of 15 PlayStation games that features **Uncharted**, **Rock Band**, **Burnout Paradise** and **God Of War: Chains Of Olympus**, as well as a rash of brilliant 'fourquels' including **GTA IV**, **COD4** and **MGS4**. Not only will you be supporting your favourite, but for every 10,000 entrants one lucky voter will win a prize. There are consoles, Sony TVs, games, Mad Catz accessories and magazine subscriptions all up for grabs.



■ GTA IV is OPM's shoe-in for Game Of The Year. But what is yours going to be?



■ MGS4 knocked GTA IV off number one, but is it better than Rockstar's crimelord?

As well as voting for the Virgin Media Ultimate Game Of The Year you can add your support to your favourite games in categories like the Nuts All Nighter Award and the BBC 1Xtra Soundtrack Of The Year. The ceremony will be held on 31 October, and you can watch it live at the Golden Joysticks official site.

Going for gold

Last year over 750,000 gamers from around the world registered their votes. At the award show, hosted by Peep Show's David Mitchell, Gears Of War grabbed the Game Of The Year title. The awards might have been running since 1982, but with 2008's shortlist packed with massive games like **Devil May Cry 4** and **Ratchet & Clank: Tools Of Destruction** this year's competition is going to be the most intense yet.



■ And let's not forget the super shooter that totally redefined the genre – Call Of Duty 4.



■ Haze won't be getting our vote but that doesn't mean you can't put an 'X' in its box.

To cast your Game Of The Year vote click on:

www.goldenjoystick.com



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Preview



Teams have between eight and 16 players.



Each side has a castle for their princess.



Send out raiders to kidnap the enemy's girl.



She starts slim, so you have to lard her up.



Use that see-saw to vault the castle walls.



It's red vs blue capture the chubby chick.



Despite the cutie style, it's super bloody.



Different character classes add depth.



"C'mon love. One last slice. Treat yourself."



Water heals you – but mind the piranha!



The maps are compact and frantic.



Protect your castle walls with fortifications.



A bridge too far for Henry on Team Blue.



Mage characters can heal or hurt.

Quick pitch

Capture the big unit

32-player cartoon capture the flag with chubby royalty replacing the flags.

Monarchic maps

The game comes with ten maps, all playable on or offline, and runs in lustrous 1080p.

Out of character

Don't like any of the four main classes? Opt out – you'll have no weapon but be able to run super fast.

Cast list



Archer



Mage



Warrior



Builder

Fat Princess

△ Her ○ Majesty's ✗ Multiplayer □ Madness

The Smurfs gone wrong. That's how Sony describes Fat Princess, one of next year's hottest PSN games. It also looks like one of the super-twee villages from Nintendo's Animal Crossing being overrun by vikings. As we watch it played, the cartoon scenery is soon slick with blood and the little vikings keep shovelling massive slices of cake into her highness's gob. Astonishing stuff. This is capture the flag as redesigned by a madman – the high concept being that the princesses are the flags, which is why it pays to feed her up, because the fatter she is, the harder it will be for the other team to haul her back to their castle.

You can select from four character classes, and switching is as simple as

changing hats (just run over the requisite headgear). Warriors are slow but armed with swords and shields. Archers are quicker and can lock-on, while Mages are the most rounded class with offensive and healing spells. Plus their hats look totally sweet. Finally, there's the builder, who can chop down trees to fortify the castle walls with. We probably won't play as builders much. Offline, you can issue orders – Attack! Build! Defend! – to your AI chums, who'll perform them in groups of four. Online, though, is where the fun's at. Who can resist the idiot genius of combining voice support with 'feed a fat girl' as a core game mechanic. There's tons more, too. Like springboards and catapults. Just know this: Fat Princess is going to be magic.



This One's A Bit Special Format PSN ETA Spring 2009 Pub Sony Dev Titan Studios





Don't expect GT5's pedantic eye for detail, this is all about throwaway fun.

Classic Series Format PS3/PSN ETA November Pub Konami Dev Sumo Digital

GTi Club+

Ⓐ Mirror ⓒ Signal ⓓ Handbrake ⓔ Shortcut

You don't need cars bristling with cylinder heads or pumped full of nitrous to make an exciting racing game. GTi Club+ (based on a cult classic arcade machine) instead lobs players the keys to a collection of compact but character-filled cars, including the Mini Cooper and Renault 5 Turbo. Like a sun-kissed Italian Job, races are a mad dash through the narrow streets and mountain passes of a fictional Monte Carlo-esque Côte d'Azur town. Expect plenty of shortcuts and a few stiff Jason Bourne-style yanks on the handbrake to negotiate.

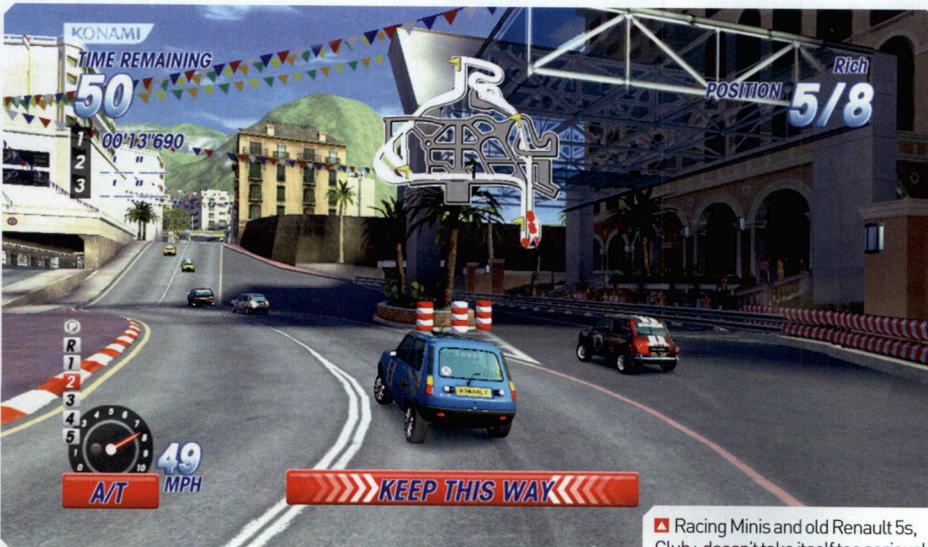
And if you're not sold yet, then how about the fact that Konami has left PS3 development duties in the

capable hands of Sumo Digital, famous for its pitch perfect port of Outrun 2? Best of all, rather than a straight arcade translation, GTi Club+ takes advantage of PS3's modern capabilities. It'll be a PSN download, featuring eight-way multiplayer, 720p visuals running at 60 frames per second and PlayStation Eye support. You'll be able to take pictures of yourself 'happy', 'sad,' or 'absolutely furious' to flash up on opponents' screens when you overtake or crash in an online race. Sounds like a perfect formula for knockabout multiplayer fun, and for £9.99, you shouldn't have trouble persuading your mates to get in on the action as well.

Prequels

Previously in the series...

GTi Club
(Arcade, 1996)
Originally released as an arcade cabinet, Konami's racer stood out with its bright visuals and a big plastic handbrake to yank as you cornered. It also included an unusual range of small fun cars, rather than the usual supercharged speedsters. Most innovative, though, was its free-roaming environment, filled with shortcuts – something unheard of in driving games at the time.



Racing Minis and old Renault 5s, Club+ doesn't take itself too seriously.

Gut Reaction

What's strong and what's wrong

▲ Not long to go now

Sony's super-sexy secret game to be revealed at the Tokyo Games Show in October. We're ready with the big words.

▲ Smashing idea

Smashing Pumpkins to debut their new single – called, ew, G.L.O.W. – as part of a three-song GH World Tour download.

▲ Leading Edge

Mirror's Edge's dev team confirms that PS3 is the lead platform, and PSN will get exclusive content. We heart you too, Faith.



053

▼ Which witch?

Hey Sega, thanks for showing us Bayonetta, the ace new actioner from Hideki Kamiya. But without any screenshots it's kinda hard to show love back.



▼ New PES, same rows

Heavy losses result in more of the usual threatened post-lunch walkouts from Team OPM's sorest losers.



▼ Nuclear disaster?

A couple of fence-sitting previews (from people who've played it for half an hour!) and the knives are out for Fallout 3. Ignore the haters – we still say it's astonishing.





Windmills dotted the later levels will create air currents that blow your petals around.



The gaming equivalent of putting Enya on and downing a bottle of aromatherapy oil.



Classic series Format PS3 ETA Autumn Pub Konami Dev The Collective

Silent Hill Homecoming

Ⓐ Abandoned ⓒ Town ⓓ Fog ⓔ Dogs

Good news: Homecoming is starting to feel more like a Silent Hill game. It still looks awful – nasty character models, blerg textures and an irritating film flicker effect that feels more 'amateur hour' than 'exploitation era' – but wandering deserted foggy streets feels the part. The locals are oblivious to the eerie decay, skinned dogs prowl the graveyard and all the locks are broken. Of course they are.

The only objection we have is the

fan-pleasing approach. Flesh nurses are in – and the hospital nightmare justifies them – but what's the deal with Pyramid Head? His enormous cleaver-sword impales a hospital worker in the opening minutes, even though he's a specific manifestation of someone's guilt from Silent Hill 2. You can't ship him in for a celeb cameo just because everyone likes him. That said, if The Collective continues to improve the atmosphere, we *might* let it go.



Original Concept Format PSN ETA Spring Pub Sony Dev That Game Company

Flower

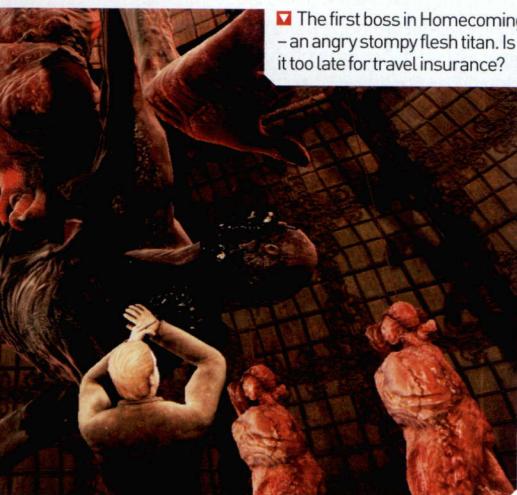
Ⓐ Not ⓒ Just ⓓ For ⓔ Hippies

This new game? Sh*t, man. It's on the road to being a classic, no doubt." Not our words – mother doesn't like it when we talk like that – but those of God Of War creator, David Jaffe – who, having seen Flower, blogged that it was likely to be "one of the most emotional games of all time." Not bad for a game in which you play a cloud of petals. Using a single button – any button in fact – to propel your flowery swirl around in conjunction with Sixaxis motion sensitivity, you return colour to the otherwise monochromatic landscape by swooping over little clumps of flowers, each of which makes a different sound – tinkling piano, gently strummed guitar, synth choral burbles – dependant on colour and size. The result is a bit like Sega's arthouse shooter Rez meets the calming ambience of Flow in a world rejected by Disney animators on the grounds of being 'too pretty'.

Field of dreams

There's no peril to be avoided as such, instead challenge comes in the form of collecting flowers in sequence, both to make pleasing runs of musical notes and to open new areas. Obviously there's an inherent satisfaction to colouring stuff in, and also a sweet visual payoff when you complete a section and a burst of radiant colour ripples through the land like the Genesis device from Star Trek II. Further in, the levels grow in complexity, with currents of wind to negotiate, but the real joy is likely to be the sensation of darting over fields of sun-dappled grass like an invisible dolphin of flowery justice. Which, if nothing else, makes a change from shooting men in the face.

☒ There's no escape – the law follows you over land and sea.



☒ There's no escape – the law follows you over land and sea.



Hype Magnet Format PS3 ETA 17 October Pub THQ Dev Volition Inc

Saints Row 2

Ⓐ It's ⓒ Funnier ⓓ Than ⓔ GTA IV

I'm dressed as a hot-dog, shooting at people from the safety of a monster truck while Boy George's Karma Chameleon pumps from the stereo. Which might not be your idea of fun, but I've made some confusing lifestyle choices. The magic/madness of Saint's Row 2 is that anything you don't like you can change – from the way you strut around, to how you grapple with rival gang members, the paint-job on your car and the music you listen to. Customisation is king in the fictional city of Stillwater.



game's missions and mini-games.

While the open-world crime vibe is unashamedly familiar, there are some great film references (which GTA IV actually shied away from) to spot. Like base jumping through an exploding hotel – a nod towards Jackie Chan's Rush Hour. Volition's love of kung-fu flicks in particular is obvious – one mission sees you swinging a samurai sword around to fend off various yellow jumpsuit-clad henchmen.

Comparisons to GTA IV are inescapable, but I suspect there's a sizeable portion of the fanbase who'll be glad that Saints Row 2 ditches ultra-realism in favour of all-out lulz. This is a big, stupid, fun game. Granted it's not great looking – Liberty City has spoiled us in that department – but it's far from disappointing, and the sheer excess could be enough to disguise the slightly rough edges.

055

Fun lovin' criminals

But for all the individuality that's on offer, the focus isn't necessarily on playing solo. The real laughs are likely to be found online, where you can invite friends into your city – or join them in theirs – to tackle any of the main

Wtf Things to do in Stillwater



Take hostages Gone are the days when jacking a car sees the passenger flee in terror. Hitting Ⓛ will trap them inside while you tear around the streets. Last long enough and your newly captured 'friend' will reward you with a fistful of dollars.

Be on TV Become a Reality TV star for the day patrolling the street as one of the city's finest. Stop streakers, break up protests, and resolve domestic disputes. It's all about ratings so the use of chainsaws and flame throwers is actively encouraged.

Control the crowd Even Z-list celebrities need protection. Earn money by protecting Stillwater's celebs from crazed fans. But why beat them up when you could put them in a JCB bucket and launch them into the air? "Marry meeeeeeeeeeee..."





Preview



056 Dark Horse Format PS3 ETA 2009 Pub Codemasters Dev Asobo Studio

Fuel

△ Cyclones ◇ Blizzards ✕ Petrol □ Prices

So the high concept pitch is Motorstorm meets Burnout Paradise. Yeah, we know, but hear us out. There's a chance this won't be some Frankensteinian cut 'n' shut monstrosity, partly because every racer Codemasters touches turns into twinkling automotive gold. (You've got Grid, right?) And partly because, in aiming so high, there's little chance of this being another middle-of-the-road racer. Either it'll live up to the hype and deliver a unique, massive, open-world racer, or it'll be a spectacular can't-look-but-must-wreck. Either way

Fuel is definitely one to watch. It's set in an alternate present where global warming has ravaged our natural resources – meaning you're racing against other desperados to earn the last remaining juice on Earth. With 5,000 square miles of driveable landscape and 100,000 miles of highways, roads and tracks to negotiate, Fuel is absolutely vast, and has a day/night weather system that incorporates cyclones, blizzards, sandstorms, thunder, lightning and everything else in Big Momma Nature's climatic kitbag.

Quick pitch

Super off-road

Compete in high-speed, high-stakes races across a wide variety of disciplines.

The real world

Explore a massive map featuring an impressive array of real-life landmarks and environments.

It's raining, men

The constantly changing weather means you'll never run the same race twice.

Also by
Asobo
Studio



Wall-E
(PS2, 2008)
Not the abominable PS3 spin-off, but the superior, lighthearted PS2 platformer.



Super Farm
(PS2, 2004)
Control animals, decking opponents with cans of beans and baseball bats. No, us neither.

For now though, a question mark hovers over the racing. We know there are loads of vehicles available – bikes, quads, trucks, muscle cars, SUVs – and we know that you'll be able to race around deserts, mountains, canyons, salt flats, forests and beaches. But we haven't gone hands-on with Fuel just yet, and dev Asobo Studio is an unknown quantity when it comes to the genre. So, until we do, it's hard to say how worried the likes of Pure, Baja: Edge Of Control and of course Motorstorm: Pacific Rift, should be. (Uh, that's a *lot* of off-roading, isn't it?)

5 good reasons Why Fuel is a breath of fresh carbon monoxide

1 Authentic locations

The Grand Canyon, Mt Rainier and the Salt Lake flats are among the real locations to be raced on and explored.

2 Spatial awareness

Codies promise a draw distance of 40km at all times – adding to the sense that you're speeding through a vast world.

3 Race effects

We're told that track type, weather, temperature and altitude affect the racing, so the game will be constantly changing around you.

4 Go explore

It's not just a racer. Head off-road and explore to find items to customise your driver with. Like, uh, helmets and tattoos. We're out.

5 Online mayhem

Up to 16 players can compete in multiplayer, with online races triggered in-game by pulling up to specific hotspots.



THOMAS
JANE

RON
PERLMAN

AND
JOHN
MALKOVICH

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TO THE
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THE NEW
DARK AGES



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AT CINEMAS FROM OCTOBER 10



Preview

Dev talk



"In drawing Lightning, the most essential thing was that she is a 'cool character'. You can't have a cool character without sex appeal."

Tetsuya Nomura
Director, FFXIII



Classic series Format PS3 ETA 2009 Pub Square Enix Dev Square Enix

Final Fantasy XIII

058 △ Cocoon ◎ Crystals ✕ Lighting ◻ Strike

The word in Japan is that the Active Battle System – the turn-based combat setup introduced by 1991's FFIV – is back, back, back! According to XIII's battle director, Toshiro Tsuchida, the system has been rebuilt with a view to recreating the flowing, cinematic action of the FF movie Advent Children. Players can stack moves to increase their potency, and use the environment offensively – at one point new hero Lightning smashes a soldier into a light to electrocute him. There's also an Overclock mode that slows time, giving you time to plan attacks.

Interestingly, Lightning *initially* seems to be the villain. FFXIII's world is split into the utopian Cocoon and the sinister Pulse, both ruled by sentient Crystals (a regular theme in FF – *keep up at the back!*). Lightning leads an assault against Cocoon and seems to have been chosen by a Crystal as... 'The enemy of mankind'.



USP Final Fantasy Agito XIII on PSP

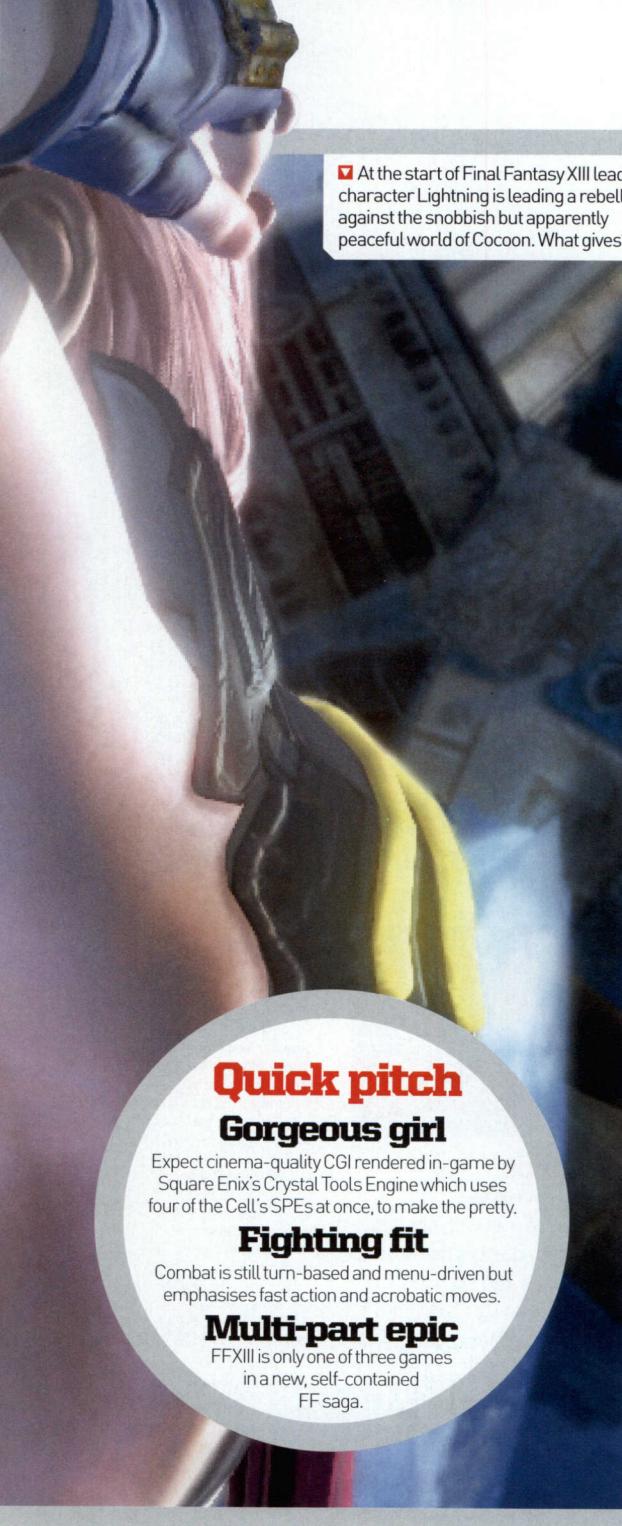


► The third part of the XIII saga, FF Agito XIII was planned as a mobile phone game, but moved to PSP as its ambition grew.

► This mysterious girl battles the hero of FF Versus XIII. Both project symbols as they fight, hinting at a new battle system.



PlayStation. Official Magazine UK



At the start of Final Fantasy XIII lead character Lightning is leading a rebellion against the snobbish but apparently peaceful world of Cocoon. What gives?

Quick pitch

Gorgeous girl

Expect cinema-quality CGI rendered in-game by Square Enix's Crystal Tools Engine which uses four of the Cell's SPEs at once, to make the pretty.

Fighting fit

Combat is still turn-based and menu-driven but emphasises fast action and acrobatic moves.

Multi-part epic

FFXIII is only one of three games in a new, self-contained FF saga.

5 reasons why

Final Fantasy XIII will devour your life



1 The story

Heroine Lightning is apparently chosen to destroy the idyllic and technologically advanced Cocoon that segregates itself from the darker Pulse. People influenced or affected by Pulse are quarantined, then exiled – suggesting this idyll has a dark underbelly.



2 The looks

The Crystal Tools engine developed by Square Enix looks incredible. There's furious debate as to whether the screen above is art or in-game. It looks too lush to be real but blurring and depth of field effects around the characters suggest otherwise.



3 The cast

This pigtailed girl is the latest character revealed. Armed with a bow, she is a Luci – someone chosen by Cocoon's rulers to undertake a special mission. She can conjure a green demigod called Carbuncle – it's almost certainly a magical 'summon' attack.



4 The combat

It's turn-based, but you'll be fusing streamlined action menus with real-time movement. An Overclock gauge enables you to slow events to inflict more powerful attacks – similar to Limit Breaks of previous games.

5 The star

Lightning's has amnesia (page five in the Big Book Of Character Clichés). Military insignia suggest she was once a soldier, though. She carries a gunblade that switches between a sword and a shotgun, and can manipulate gravity.



Dark horse Format PS3 ETA TBC Pub Square Enix Dev Square Enix

Final Fantasy Versus XIII

Ⓐ Gothic ⓒ Prince ⓔ Dark ⓕ City

Set in the same universe as FFXIII, Versus XIII is an entirely independent story. Focusing on a shadowy, moody-looking prince, the last in a monarchy that controls the only remaining Crystal in the world – a powerful artefact in Final Fantasy lore (see Final Fantasy XIII, above left). As ruler of the Dark City, the Prince is a formidable foe, using telekinesis and potent magic to defend himself: vital given that his nation is locked in a Cold War-style standoff with a rival state.

According to director Tetsuya Nomura the combat will involve real-time battles akin to Kingdom Hearts, with some first-person elements. Overall the tone will be darker, bleaker and more realistic than in other FF games. That said the Prince's friends (pictured right) seem fairly upbeat, mucking about and laughing with each other in the latest trailer. Meanwhile, a new blond girl is seen wandering around the Prince's castle and could be his love interest. Maybe she'll cheer him up a bit.



The Latest On...

New shots, new games, new info



Overlord 2

Format PS3 ETA 2009 Pub Codemasters

More comedic minion management, but now your ugly assistants can ride wolves and use disguises. This time the Roman Empire is wiping out magical creatures, forcing your tyrannical Overlord to fight back.



Savage Moon

Format PSN download ETA November Pub Sony

Tower defence on a galactic scale. Think *Pixeljunk Monsters* meets *Starship Troopers* as you protect asteroid-mining colonies by building super weapons to fend off waves of bugs called Insectocytes.



Lords Of Shadow

Format PS3 ETA 2010 Pub Konami

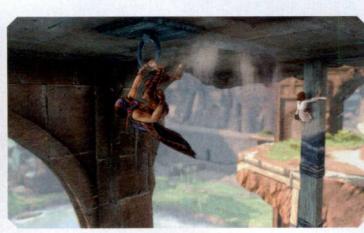
They call it 'a dark fairytale', we say it's *Castlevania* in 3D. Hero Gabriel doesn't just have the series' trademark flowing hair and shiny armour; he's also got a fiery chain-whip that can roast a monster at 40 paces.



Killzone 2

Format PS3 ETA 10 March 2009 Pub Sony

Sony's super-sequel has some surprises hidden up its multiplayer classes. Like Engineers who can knock up sentry towers, Tacticians who set spawn points, and cloaked snipers.



Prince Of Persia

Format PS3 ETA 18 November Pub Ubisoft

Wall-running is so 2003 – for his next-gen debut, the all-action royal has a fancy new roof-running move. Handy rings also now help the Prince flip across ceilings upside down. Show off.



Alpha Protocol

Format PS3 ETA 9 February Pub Sega

Previous shots were met with shrugs, thanks to Sega's spy doing little more than hug lonely walls and stare out of a window. But look! Now he's doing exciting stuff! With guns! You go boy.

There's more...

The PS3 version of *Alone In The Dark* is still on the way [we're told November] and it'll have an exclusive new chapter and a totally revamped control system. Developers took note of the blerg 360 reviews and decided to fix the biggest issues raised. Vivendi has relinquished its rights to the *FEAR* name – as a result the game's spiritual shooter successor, *Project Origin*, has been renamed *FEAR 2: Project Origin*. *Far Cry 2* hasn't even hit the shelves yet, but *Far Cry 3* has already been confirmed by Ubisoft, and the developer is planning to stick with the African setting. If you prefer ballads to bullets you'll be happy to hear that Jacko has signed up for some *SingStar* – *Billy Jean* will feature in *SingStar Vol.3*. There are also two new PS2 *SingStar*s on the way, *SingStar Sing Along With Disney* and *SingStar Queen*. You'll also be able to hot swap PS2 disks in your PS3 soon – the feature will be added by a firmware update. Meanwhile Sony's *Life With PlayStation*, which enables users to access news and weather via a sexy globe on their PS3, has been delayed. The word from Sony is to "hold tight". Finally, the *Sin City* game has switched developer, and now won't be out until Christmas '09.

Tomb Raider Underworld

Format PS3 ETA 21 November Pub Eidos

Lara's latest is showing more promise each time we see it. For the first time ever, her entire repertoire of moves has been motion captured using (the brilliantly named) Heidi Moneymaker, a stuntwoman and former gymnast. There's also a new 'free climb' system so Lara can scale walls like Altair from *Assassin's Creed*, making use of whatever hand or foothold she can find.



It was a quiet night at the inter-species disco but Bob had a good feeling about the blonde with the pistols.



INSIDE THIS MONTH'S **T3** **FREE!** 52-PAGE MAGAZINE

THE SEXIEST GADGETS OF ALL TIME

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The sexiest gadgets of all time

THE MUST-HAVE KIT YOU'LL SELL YOUR SOUL TO OWN



194-PAGES OF RED-HOT GADGET HEAVEN
BLACKBERRY BOLD JAGUAR CONCEPT BIKE IN-CAR TECH

DEAD

24 · 10

18

• **SPACE™**

• 2008



feature

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PS
064



PlayStation. Official magazine UK



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What kind of superhero would you be? Find out with Sony's inFamous...



GTA. Three letters that trail a huge reputation in their wake. Three letters that most developers are very happy not to see their latest project compared to, however special it is. After all, who wants their sandbox game to be mentioned in the same breath as Rockstar's genre defining, pop culture phenomenon? THQ's crime copyist Saints Row 2? Definitely not like GTA, they reckon. Midway's open-world wish fulfilment This Is Vegas? Nuh-uh, not like GTA either. Sucker Punch's inFamous? "It's like GTA – an open-world where you cruise around and deal with things," says game director Nate Fox.

Wait, what?

Yes, you read that right. Fox has no problem with the GTA comparison, so long as it's "GTA with real-life superheroes". He's a sensible man for not dodging the issue, because who *wouldn't* want to play a game with that tagline? But inFamous does more than just talk big. Huge in scale and ambition, it's an adrenaline-juiced free-roaming adventure in which lead protagonist Cole throws electricity with his bare hands and slings cars across railway tracks with a quick flick of the wrist. And that's just in *the first scene*. This time next year, rival developers





▲ Every surface in the game can be climbed on, up, or over. Think Assassin's Creed, set now..



▲ In broad daylight the vast expanse of Empire City feels real and looks spectacular.

will find themselves saying "Our new game is like inFamous, but with..."

Electrifying start

In case you missed the unveiling back in issue 21, inFamous begins with a huge explosion that decimates six blocks of Empire City, the game's fictional setting. While many of those in the vicinity are killed – including the city's entire police force – those who do survive soon discover that they've been mutated and now each have some form of superpower. However, all the survivors are members of gangs (Sod's Law's a swine, eh?), who soon take over large sections of the city for themselves. The single exception is Cole. That's you. At the outset he needs two questions answered: 1.) "Why did I survive?" And, 2.) "When did I learn to charge my iPod with nothing more than an intense stare?"

Cole is deliberately designed to be a modern-day, graphic novel type of superhero. He doesn't wear a cape or a giant, novelty belt buckle. Developer Sucker Punch wants him to be believable in so much as a genetically altered man for whom AC/DC isn't a sexual preference can be, so they've gone to great lengths to make Empire City a living, breathing environment. Pedestrians notice and remember you, just as you'd find it hard to forget

Chronology

Rocket: Robot On Wheels (Nintendo 64, 1999)

It all started for inFamous developer Sucker Punch with this cute-as-a-button-worn-by-Fearne Cotton platformer set in a theme park. You control Rocket through seven differently themed worlds, in which he has to collect tokens to gain new moves (slam jump, rocket jump, freeze, grapple). The vehicles were genuinely fun and you could build your own rollercoaster.



Sly Raccoon (PS2, 2003)

Released as the tongue-twisting Sly Cooper And The Thieves, Sly Raccoon ushers in a new era for the series. It's a mix of stealth and action, with a cel-shaded, film noir aesthetic. The game follows Sly as he steals from various locations, including a theme park, and tracks down his pals' hunt for a book containing the secret to his ancestors' success.



Will you play as an upstanding good guy when you can do *this*? Thought not.



a gangly skinhead chucking lorries across the M5. There's an ongoing 'crime ecology', which means bad things happen on the fly, all the time, for you to react to or ignore. And, according to game director Nate Fox it's so "very, very vast" that they can't quantify just how massive it is in virtual square feet.

And what do you actually do in Empire City? That's up to you. There are scripted events that will advance the storyline, but equally you can just ignore them if you want. The nature of the crime ecology system is such that you can get involved in as much or as little as you like. If you spot a mugging or a carjacking you can fry the perpetrator with a quick zap, or simply walk on by. The upside to helping out the public is that gradually word of what a stand-up guy you are spreads, and they begin to come to your aid – such as when you need backup in a battle against a boss or in a gang fight. But a big part of the fun is that you can choose to add to the chaos in Empire City by playing as a bad



If you see this man in public, do not approach him. Run the other way REALLY REALLY FA... zzzzp! Too late.

guy, deliberately chucking innocents around in their cars, or leaving them for dead when you could step in to defibrillate them with your power. Do that and you'll slowly become hated and feared.

Current affairs

This doesn't mean you're encouraged to take the immoral path through the game, but Fox freely admits that it's his preferred way of playing – "I'm a bad guy at heart." The superpowers and weapons you unlock as you progress are all dependent on the reputation you build, either way, although Fox responds to every one of



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our questions about what Cole's other powers may be with "I'll tell you in two months". The glint in his eye suggests we should be excited. We are.

What Fox does admit is that this isn't like Bioshock, where you get to choose your plasmids (that game's equivalent of superpowers) and have complete control of how and when you advance them. "Here it's decided by the game, [based on] the player's actions," he admits. "It's not like you get experience points and then you get to decide. You don't ever get to kill fifty people and then decide, 'I'm gonna get these specific special powers'. Your actions decide how you grow so you

Sly 2: Band Of Thieves (PS2, 2004)

More comic book-style, cel-shaded platforming antics. Sly's buddies Bentley the turtle and Murray the hippo were now playable, and health was introduced (in the first game it took just one hit to kill Sly). Like Manhunt, it was compatible with the PS2 USB mic, enabling you to make noise to attract enemies – and forcing you to stay schtum during stealthier moments.



Sly 3: Honour Among Thieves (PS2, 2006)

The last of the Sly games – for now, at least – featured a PS2 first: it came packaged with specially designed 3D glasses and thus featured optional 3D levels. (It sort of worked, but gave you a headache.) More playable characters were added, including Sly's rival Carmelita Fox, and bespoke offline multiplayer modes also made their debut (for more, see page 71).



▼ Instead of driving cars, you 'just' get to zap the crap out of them. It's a fair trade.



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"Cole's electricity runs dead unless he harvests regularly."

make the choice every second you're in the game."

For now, the single superpower which Cole starts off is more than enough to make us want to play more. As well as being able to defibrillate stricken pedestrians and fry baddies to a crisp, he can incapacitate foes with a short, sharp shock, enabling

▼ Your power can be used to shield items and pedestrians – or yourself, of course.

you to capture people alive (this'll no doubt be necessary in early missions). And he can interact with other electrical objects, such as channelling his electrickery through a set of generators to blow up everything in the vicinity. Plus he can cause chains of electricity by zapping a conductive object close to others: that way you can kill an enemy hiding behind a phone box at the other end of the street by electrifying a car near you and watching the current pass down an entire stream of traffic, then frazzling the phone box. Outstanding.

Precious joules

But as British Gas keeps reminding us, energy doesn't come for free. Just as a gun runs out of bullets if you don't reload, Cole's electricity supply runs dead unless he harvests it at regular intervals. The city has



a fully functioning, authentic power grid, meaning he can recharge by finding pylons and phone boxes and essentially sucking the power from those objects into his body. But the post-apocalyptic nature of the city means that it's prone to blackouts – meaning there are times where you have to be very careful about where and when you use Cole's limited remaining voltage, or else risk leaving him as dangerous as a broken radio.





▲ The cover system, similar to the one in Uncharted, handles like a dream.

While you can sling cars around until your heart is content, one thing you won't be able to do is ride around inside them. "We're not really focused on driving," explains Fox. "We're very much focused on Cole being able to move around the city as a superhero would." That means no jumping into the nearest Cognoscenti and mowing down pedestrians, but it also means something more impressive: Cole moves around by leaping onto and over everything and anything. The entire city is climbable. We've seen him scamper up walls, telephone wires, electricity pylons, and riding on the roof of a train. As a tease Fox also tells us he can go "underground". Does he mean a subway system? Sewers? He breaks into a smile at the second suggestion, and we think we're onto something. "I'll tell you in two



months," he chuckles. Again.

Most impressively, Cole can snap into cover while interacting with the scenery. InFamous utilises an almost identical cover system to the superb one in Uncharted: Drake's Fortune, where you can automatically lock into cover behind the nearest wall or object just by hitting **○**. This feels like Uncharted's mechanic taken to

▲ Cut-scenes are all done in a comic book style that's strikingly similar to this exclusive concept art.

the next level, often literally: when an enemy opens fire as we ascend an electricity pylon, we swiftly snap into cover while *halfway up*, then toast him with a couple of electrical arcs to the face. It's beautifully simple but no less satisfying for that.

With a year until release there's much more to come from inFamous. We know that, at some point, Cole hooks up with two old pals – a conspiracy theorist called Zeke and an ex-girlfriend named Trish. And we know Sucker Punch is planning some tremendous boss battles with characters who also have their own bombastic superpowers. When we ask Fox about these, he smiles knowingly and yet again insists he'll tell us more "in two months". And you can bet your last bolt of lightning that we'll keep him to that promise.

Influences The inSpiration for inFamous



GTA IV



Heroes



Assassin's Creed



Batman



Uncharted





Interview

inFamous' game director, Nate Fox, talks Heroes, Batman, and how COD4 changed the world...

OPM You're quite happy to cite GTA as a major inspiration for inFamous. How deep do the similarities run?

Nate Fox Yeah, I believe that people who've played Grand Theft Auto will be familiar with the structure of the game. I feel like with videogames, there's the pre-Grand Theft Auto world and the post-Grand Theft Auto world, and what that game does is instruct us all about what open experiences are like. And it illustrates that players want a lot of freedom and they want to have choice - they want to own the experience. So in this regard I think people will feel right at home. However, the actions you perform and the character you are is totally different. But the vibe is kinda the same: that it's your experience.

OPM Can you tell us a bit more about the structure of inFamous?

NF It's an open-world game in which you have helper characters who progress the storyline. You can troop around and do all the things that you want to, but then we also have missions that have definite beginnings and ends. Along the way we have pre-scripted events so that you're there for the coolest thing that's happening in the city - so that you feel more like the author in missions than you do in most open-world games.

OPM How divergent is the storyline depending on your behaviour?

NF I cannot tell you everything, but I can tell you that the world reacts to you. So you're gonna have to solve problems, and you can solve them in one of two ways. Either you can be the punisher, out to kill everybody and indiscriminate in how you take care of business, or you can be kind of surgical like Batman. Every mission is designed so that you can express your sense of morality.

OPM Looking at the game earlier I thought I saw a sign parodying Safeco Field, Seattle's

baseball stadium. Is the city based on Seattle or is it totally fictional?

NF I live in Seattle so it's where I know, but we chose to use a fictional city because we wanted to provide a lot of diversity in the architecture. We didn't want to be slavish in creating the neighbourhoods of Boston or wherever. So we just had more latitude to say, 'OK, we're not trying to recreate a specific city - but you know we kind of had Seattle [to measure it against]. I don't think it feels like Seattle to be honest with you, but our Sony producers are like, "Oh, why is it Seattle?" because they see lots of traffic signs. Why that reminds them of Seattle I don't know. And there's a lot of smacktalk in the signage, but whether that makes it into the game depends on how funny it is.

OPM Do you have a demo planned yet?

NF No, I don't think we do. I'm sorry. But that's an excellent point, we will have a demo planned in the next few months.

OPM How natural is the progression from Sly Raccoon to inFamous?

NF The transition from working on Sly to creating inFamous is actually pretty natural. If you look at Sly, we're such total comic book fans. Did you ever see the Batman cartoon? It had this really noir vibe to it. Everything was very stylised and crisp, like a lot of comic books are. Sly and inFamous have that inspiration in common.

OPM So why not just stick with Sly for PS3?

NF It's just something you think about when you start looking around, and you say, 'Okay, we've done three games...' We love the Sly Raccoon franchise, but wanted to do something different. For instance I wanted to make a game where I didn't have to sneak around, 'cause I was so tired of having to be quiet and stealthy. As a change of pace I wanted to do a game where I got to go in and

be a big loud hammer, where I just got to break stuff and not worry about being a thief. And that's why we really wanted to make a superhero game.

OPM Will there be a Sly 4?

NF We would love to get back to Sly if the possibility arises. But we are a small team and we only do one game at a time, so right now everybody is set on making inFamous really good.

OPM It's a similar situation to the one Naughty Dog finds itself in, switching from Jak & Daxter to Uncharted - which is now rumoured to be getting a sequel. Do you see yourselves following that path?

NF You know, I don't really know what the future holds for inFamous. But if people love it I can't imagine that there won't be more inFamous. But right now we're just so focused on the first one.

OPM Inevitably people will compare inFamous to the TV show Heroes. Is that a lazy comparison?

NF We were in production before Heroes came out, but I am ecstatic that you would make that comparison because Heroes is a spectacular show and it really helps get people oriented to what our game is about. So no, I don't think it's lazy - it's great. I think the big difference between us and Heroes is we're making a videogame. There's a similarity in tone from the Heroes' standpoint and our protagonist's standpoint. But we have to set it in a disaster area like post-Katrina, because otherwise there's not this landscape of danger that's immediate and all around you. Without it, the gaming world isn't interesting or fun.

OPM How long will inFamous be if you just play straight through, start to finish?

NF I don't know that I could give a specific

Need a hand?

Just as Niko Bellic can call on Roman's taxis or Dwayne's muscle to help him out in GTA IV, and Nathan Drake is given a hand by Elena and (on rare occasions) Sully in Uncharted, you won't always be going it alone with Cole. We know of two characters who hook up with him at as yet unspecified points in the game: Zeke, a conspiracy theorist and survivalist who becomes jealous of Cole's powers (expect him to go all Sly at some point) and Trish, Cole's ex-girlfriend. She's a medical student who resents Cole but still helps treat the injured. Sucker Punch calls her a "Lois Lane with syringes", which will do us just fine.



Bat legacy

The cartoon Nate Fox refers to as an inspiration is Batman: The Animated Series, which first aired in 1992. It had a darker, more adult vibe than previous superhero 'toons, and was the first animated show in years to feature firearms instead of laser guns. Batman bled and, in one episode, Commissioner Gordon was actually shot. Little-known Kevin Conroy played Batman, while Star Wars legend Mark Hamill voiced the Joker. Critics blasted it for being too violent, but fans heralded it as a lesson in bringing comic books to the small screen with style. It lasted 85 episodes, the last of which was broadcast in 1995.

Elle of a girl

Cole's electrical superpower bears a noticeable similarity to the one belonging to Elle Bishop, Kristen Bell's character introduced during season two of Heroes. Bishop can manipulate electricity, discharging it as electrical arcs. In the show she's used her power to knock people out, weld a lock, and kill a man, although there's a key difference between her and Cole (yes, other than the fact she's a really hot girl): she can also generate electricity, whereas Cole has to harvest it. Season three of Heroes began in the US on 22 September with a three-hour opening episode. The BBC plans to start airing it again later in the autumn.





Comic capers

To tie in with the releases of Sly 2: Band Of Thieves and Sly 3: Honor Among Thieves, Sucker Punch teamed up with DC Comics to produce two comic books, using the same art style as that found in the games. The books were used both to transition each story from that of the previous game, and to further flesh out the characters. For instance, the first comic book features two flashback stories. One sees the Cooper gang's first taste of thief work as kids at the Happy Camper Orphanage, while the other relates Sly's first meeting with female rival Carmelita. [Turns out they were quite pally once upon a time.] Want to see them for yourself? Head to store.suckerpunch.com, where the last few are going for just \$2.49.

length. It's something we learned from Sly 3. It had this pirate episode – 'cause I'm a huge pirate fan – and it involved this aspect where you could sail around in boats and get in pirate ship battles. And people spent about a quarter of their time in the game cruising around doing this, and that part of the game was massive. What we learnt from that was that when you have this freedom to explore and goof around in the space, people really enjoy it. So it's hard for me to tell you how long the game will take people. I know that the mission content takes many, many, many hours – I wouldn't want to give you an exact time frame. It's very, very large in scale.

OPM Do you think too much importance is put on a game's length these days?

NF It's always new to me because if people aim to make a forty-hour game that means it's not as dense with quality. I always think of God Of War. It's a short game but, man, it's just chock full of cool stuff. It's kind of a classic. They hit a home run. It's not that long but it's so high quality that you want to play it again and it stays with you – there are all these moments that they deliver on. So I would hope games try and live up to that density of quality. If something is fifty hours long, great, but when you're an old man you have less time to play videogames than you would like, and so you end up really wanting as dense quality product as possible.

OPM Have you learned a lot from Assassin's Creed, where the initial open-world concept was strong but perhaps didn't deliver what it promised?

As you might imagine I played a lot of Assassin's Creed and I really like it. It has that freedom experience that I think Grand Theft Auto initiated us into, and the quality of the city is unparalleled in the sense that you get this landscape that's filled with people and culture and things

are happening all around you. So in this regard we really are trying to look at that for inspiration, but we have more of a backstory and we put more emphasis on mission architecture.

OPM Sly 2 and 3 had accompanying comic books. Is that something you'd like to do with this game?

NF We would love to do comic books for inFamous. **We actually made those comic books with our art team on Sly because** we had downtime while we were designing other things when they were waiting to go in and polish the game itself. But right now everybody on the inFamous team is so totally focused on creating assets that we're not internally going to make comic books. I don't think we have the time. But as I say, we certainly draw a lot of inspiration from graphic novels.

OPM Nathan Hale, Nathan Drake, and Cole are in a room. Fight to the death. Who comes out on top?

NF Oh, er... I would have to give it to Nathan Hale. He has freaky yellow eyes, which gives him a leg up. Plus he has a gun that shoots through walls, so he would nail everybody before he even entered the room with that gun, you know? And how are you gonna beat that?

OPM Hang on... Cole can fire electricity out of his bare hands!

NF Yeah, but Hale's gun shoots through walls! Cole would never see him coming in the first place.

OPM It goes without saying that you're a big shooter fan...

NF Yeah well, you know, I'm a man! What are you gonna do? I don't have a choice in that: I have to shoot things with my videogame console. It's required.

OPM What are your thoughts on how Call Of Duty 4 has changed the landscape of modern shooters?

NF I think Call Of Duty 4: Modern Warfare raised the bar significantly, to a point where trying to get into that space is very, very, very difficult. I don't think they really redefined it, they just did the best presentation, the best layout, the best everything. **They own the first-person shooting experience from a standpoint of technical mechanical grace.** And they did two things that totally blew my mind. They had that car ride where you're going through the Middle Eastern country. It was like virtual reality – totally brilliant. And then they had you in the helicopter that crashed and your character died from radiation poisoning, man oh man that is awesome. I can't imagine that people won't do that from now on. I mean it's spectacular, and what a lot of money goes into that four minutes, but holy smokes it was amazing. And shockingly neither of those things I've picked out are shooting, they're just great first-person experiences. War's hell, man.

OPM Other than inFamous (obviously), what else is on your radar right now?

NF I am really looking forward to playing LittleBigPlanet, particularly to see the user-created content, because that seems like kind of the way forward to me, like the next Grand Theft Auto in paradigm shifts. It's a really big deal. **I can't wait to see Dragon Age** **I just love BioWare.** I've been a fan of everything they've ever done. Another game I'm really looking forward to is The Force Unleashed because I think that from what I've seen of their story it looks really well put together, and I'm a big Star Wars fan. And I am looking forward to Resistance 2 because I have total and utter fanboy love for the Insomniac team, so I could just gobble their stuff up.

Sunken dreams

Released in 2005 to little fanfare but plenty of acclaim – our sister mag OPS2 [godspeed, old girl] scored it 9/10 – Sly 3 wasn't just an ace single-player game. It also featured two unlockable multiplayer modes, the best being Pirate Battle. It does what it says on the tin: your vessel is armed with cannons and you have to steer while shooting at the enemy ship. Strategy comes from having to make repairs as you go, and your rate of fire being limited due to the cannons needing to cool down.



COD worship

With an astonishing seven million copies shifted in just two months, Call Of Duty 4 was the biggest selling game of 2007. You also voted it our Game Of The Year by more than twice the number of votes received by the second placed game, Ratchet & Clank: Tools Of Destruction. By June 2008 COD4's sales had passed the ten million mark. The follow-up, Call Of Duty: World At War, has been developed by Call Of Duty 3 veterans Treyarch and is due in November. Meanwhile Infinity Ward, which developed COD4, is working on an as yet undisclosed project.



Tasty ware

Formed in Canada in 1995, BioWare has since gained itself a reputation as one of the leading makers of RPGs – although its first game was an action title called Shattered Steel. It insists it was the first game ever to feature deformable terrain effects. Baldur's Gate, Neverwinter Nights and Knights Of The Old Republic later sealed its status as RPG king, and last year it teamed up with Demiurge Studios to produce Xbox 360 hit Mass Effect. Next up is Dragon Age: Origins, coming to PS3 for Christmas 2009.





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In the mood for... Monkeys

Spare a banana for the hairiest mentalists in PlayStation history

Man's closest relative. Sometimes they seem so human. Other times they're a fang-bearing, chest-thumping stack of muscle and rage; rattling the bars of their cage and flinging poo at snapping tourists. In games, though, they play a far more varied role. Whether it's leading a short, fearful life in a plastic bubble before falling to their doom in Monkey Ball, or touting twin P90s and riddling you with bullets in Timesplitters 2. Ask the right monkey and they can even give you dating advice, "Steal girl, climb somewhere high." Although King Kong's match.com page has been a bit quiet recently. Bad profile pic. Join us now as we check out the monkeys that make PlayStation swing.



Monkey (Pain)

Launch yourself from a catapult in Pain and there are plenty of targets to hit. The monkeys are the stars, though. It's disturbing to watch them taunt you by smacking their bare bottoms, but it's hard to miss. As is the flatulent trumpeting when you hit them. Play Spank The Monkey and see how many you can wallop against the clock.



Specter (Ape Escape)

Monkeys look cuddly but they're a simmering cauldron of evolutionary resentment waiting to boil over. When Specter puts on a Peak Point Helmet, a device for amplifying intelligence, he realises performing at the zoo sucks large ones and tries to take over the world using time travel, robots and – still on our wishlist – a huge monkey army.



Little Gray (MGS4)

Drebin, Snake's gun laundering arms dealer, has a strange pet: a soda-addicted sidekick who has to be one of Metal Gear's weirdest characters yet – a shaved monkey wearing leather hot pants who steals Snake's fags. Stranger yet, the part was actually played by Raiden's motion capture actor after Kojima decided Drebin was too dull on his own.



MeeMee (Super Monkey Ball Deluxe)

Look away now, PETA. There aren't many monkeys we have feelings for, but there's a special place in our hearts for MeeMee. It could be those huge, trusting eyes, her soft fur, or the little plastic ball she trundles around in. Or, just maybe, it's the guilt each time our melon fingers roll her screaming into the abyss.



intermission

A tasty PlayStation snack



Pogo (GTA III)

This genetically modified monkey stars in classic GTA III radio adverts. "He's got springs for legs!" they announce. The fictitious game challenges you to kill the scientists experimenting on Pogo, escape the lab and take over the White House. The best bit is the merchandising, which includes feminine hygiene products, "So she smells like a real monkey." Uh...



Monkey (Timesplitters 2)

The real stars of Timesplitters. Appearing as zombies, cyborgs, ninja and 'ape' – they can do it all. There is an unwritten rule in multiplayer never to play as the monkey, because their tiny size offers an unfair advantage. 'Monkey Assistance' matches, however, give the lowest ranked player a little hairy bodyguard to protect them.

King Kong (Peter Jackson's King Kong)

He's got a pretty sweet deal compared to most giant apes: a nice big tree to sleep under, a hot girlfriend, all the villagers he can eat, and plenty of media attention. Okay, so beating up dinosaurs is a little hard on the knuckles but everyone has a cross to bear. Shame that trip to New York didn't really pan out...

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Now have your say

Were there any apes that escaped? Email opm@futurenet.co.uk and let us know. Here are some that didn't make the cut.

■ Agent 9 is a playable monkey from the Spyro games. And while a gun-toting space monkey sounds cool, he just doesn't work.

■ Donkey Kong. One of the most famous gaming simians in history, but he works for 'the other side' so misses out.

■ George The Ape smashes buildings in the arcade game Rampage. He's a little too 'earthy' for us, though.



The father of EVIL

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He created Resident Evil, oversaw Devil May Cry and had a hand in Killer7. We talk to Shinji Mikami about his career, and his two mysterious PS3 exclusives

**WORLD
EXCLUSIVE
REPORT**
PlayStation.
Official Magazine - UK



A close-up, profile photograph of Shinji Mikami, looking upwards and to the right. He has dark hair and is wearing a dark, zip-up hoodie with the word "Ruisse" printed on it. The background is a blurred indoor setting with a window.

interview

Shinji Mikami

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interview

Shinji Mikami

Could you tell us a little bit about the origin of Resident Evil?

Well, simply put, I wanted to make a game where you could play in a scary atmosphere. That was the starting point. Tokuro Fujiwara [creator of Ghosts 'N Goblins] was my boss. "Make a horror game, then," he said to me. "Make a game that uses the system we had in [1989 Famicom game] Sweet Home."

So why did you choose to use zombies?

Well, if I'd just been going for the scariest type of enemy, we'd have had to use ghosts or demons. But in a game, if you're shooting ghosts the bullets logically shouldn't hit properly, so I wanted to use 'living' enemies, which you could get satisfaction from shooting, and ended up settling on zombies. At first we did a test version of the game that had similar visuals – or rather, a similar camera – to Resident Evil 4, but the PlayStation couldn't really handle it.

In Japan the game is called Biohazard, but it was changed to Resident Evil in the West. Were you against this?

Yes, I opposed it! I don't even know what 'Resident Evil' means! At the time Capcom USA had the right to decide on a title, so I ended up losing out. [In English] Very sad!

Were you happy with how Resi 2 turned out? You've said before that it wasn't scary enough...

I was quite happy with it. It's not scary, that's true, but it was Hideki Kamiya's first project as director, and I think he did a good job considering that it was his debut project. I think it was an excellent game overall.

And how did Resi 3 come about?

Resident Evil 3 was supposed to be a minor game, developed particularly for real Resident Evil fans. It was just called Last Escape before it became a numbered sequel. It's really a side story, but my boss at the time, Okamoto-san, said, "Call it Resident Evil 3". We were fighting over this point for three days. We'd changed Resident Evil 2 to make sure the game could be enjoyed by anyone, not just the fans of the first game. Our objective with Last Escape was to make a deeper game again. But then we had to change it to make it appeal to everyone, making the experience flatter and shallower. At the start it hadn't been designed for the mainstream – it ended up all jumbled.

Which is your favourite enemy from the Resident Evil series?

My favourite enemy?! That would be the zombies, I suppose. After the zombies, my second-favourite enemy would be Wesker.

How about your favourite hero?

Chris, maybe, or Jill. Yeah, I'll go for Chris. But he's hardly a hero. He's not cool, and he's ugly! But I like the fact that he's not cool...

At the end of Resi games the guy and the girl never seem to get together – Billy and Rebecca in Resident Evil Zero, Leon and Ashley in Resi 4...

In games, there isn't much time to draw scenarios, so romance gets cut from the process before development even begins. Everyone would be thinking, 'Why are they starting to kiss all of a sudden?' It's not that I don't want to produce kiss scenes or anything, but... Maybe there could be some snogging with zombies?

Would you be interested in creating an online focused game in the future?

At some point I'd like to, yes. I'm absolutely interested, but I don't yet have the know-how. If I can have two or three years to make an online game, I'm sure I can do it.

Do you think there's a difference between Japanese and Western developers with regard to sequels?

There seem to be lots more new games coming out in the West, but Japanese developers are making a lot of sequels. One time, at the Tokyo Game Show, I appeared at a conference and was asked by an irate Japanese guy why Japanese game creators make so many sequels. I went off on one: "I don't want to keep on making sequels! I want to make new titles! I'm only making sequels because you lot keep on asking for them!" But still, research tells us that most Japanese gamers want sequels more than anything else.

What elements would you say define a Shinji Mikami game?

My games are a mixture of Sadism and Masochism. It's because my initials are S.M. [Shinji Mikami]: Sadism Masochism. [Laughs]

On Killer7 you collaborated with Suda51. He seems to have a lunatic

"I probably won't play Resident Evil 5. It will just cause me stress."

Is it true that Devil May Cry was initially conceived as a Resident Evil sequel?

We made Devil May Cry as a Resident Evil sequel, but we thought fans of the series would be upset if we released it under the Resident Evil name, because it's a completely different type of game. Kamiya went ahead with development at a really strong pace early on, and before I knew it, he had changed it completely. [Laughs]

Resident Evil 4 seems to have been through significant changes during its development. What was the game like when you took over from director Hiroshi Shibata, and what did you want to accomplish?

Resident Evil 4's theme was the same all the way along, but I made a full model change to the game. I was thinking, after Resident Evil 1, 2 and 3, if we don't make something fresh we're not going to be able to continue with the series. Shibata had tried a few times to incorporate a full model change, but he was only able to make minor changes. That's why I came in – to tear everything down and rebuild it.

imagination – did you feel you had to tone down any of his crazier ideas?

I didn't have to cut any ideas from Killer7 – he was free to make the game as he liked. I wasn't giving orders like "Do this" or "Do that" – the only thing I had to cut a bit was the scenario and storyline. That's why it's such a weird game: because all of Suda's game ideas are in there!

Do you understand the game's ending? Can you tell us what it means?

That's a secret! Only three or four of us know the true meaning, and it'll stay secret forever.

You're now working with Platinum Games through your own studio, Straight Story. How does the creative process at Platinum work?

First, I think up a few visual scenes. Then I think about how to put those scenes inside a game system. After that, I have the graphics programmed to bring my visual ideas to life. The graphics prepared that differ from what I had in mind, I have 'repaired'. Of course ideas for visual scenes alone aren't enough, so I always think through how they can be worked into a game system.



interview

Shinji Mikami

If you had to come up with three 'golden rules' of game design, what would they be?

- 1) Games have to be interesting to look at.
- 2) Games have to be interesting to play.
- 3) Games have to be trustworthy – in the sense that fans never feel betrayed – and easy to understand.

You're currently working on a game as part of Platinum Games' deal with Sega – can you give us any hint as to what that will be like?

Ask Sega. [Laughs, but won't elaborate.]

It was recently announced that you're also working with Suda51 again on a horror game for EA. How did you come to be working on two things at once?

When we finished working on *Killer7*, Suda brought a proposal to me that I really liked the look of. I said to him then, "We've got to do this at some point". But it looked like it would take a lot of money to make, so we were searching for a sponsor for a few years and in the end we found EA. There was no Japanese publisher willing to offer us the money needed to make this game. In general, publishers outside of Japan are more willing to risk money commissioning new IP. In that sense, EA understood our proposal better than any Japanese publisher.

Is it difficult for you to work on two projects at once?

Yes, it's difficult. Very difficult! But I'm director on my game for Platinum Games and producer on the game for EA. So if Suda does his job properly, my workload will decrease. [Laughs.]

What do you and Suda each bring to the collaboration?

Suda's strengths are stylish visuals and characters, and cool, mysterious game scenarios. I'm good at making the gameplay interestingly, so I think we make a good team.

The EA game is described as 'action horror'. Are you aiming to make it scary, like the first Resident Evil?

It's a slightly different type of game from Resident Evil.

With Dead Space and Mirror's Edge, do you agree that EA is becoming more creative again, after a few years of exploiting sequels and licences?

That really had nothing to do with our decision to go with EA.

So you're just in it for the money?

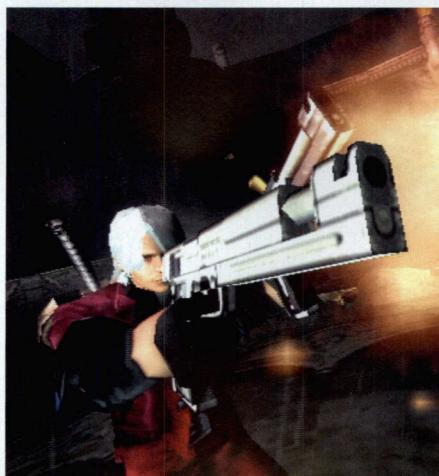
[Laughs] The biggest draw was that they liked



Who is...

Shinji Mikami

Shinji Mikami joined Capcom as a planner in 1990. After four years working on Disney-licensed games including *Who Framed Roger Rabbit* and *Goof Troop*, he started developing a horror game for Sega Saturn and PlayStation. On its release, *Resident Evil* was a massive hit, kickstarting the entire survival horror genre. Working variously as producer and director, Mikami helped to nurture the *Resident Evil* series and *Devil May Cry* before leaving Capcom to start his own company, Straight Story. His collaborations since then have included *Killer7* and *God Hand*.



our proposal and showed real interest in it.

There's a growing sense that Resident Evil 5 looks a lot like Resident Evil 4, only in Africa and HD – what do you make of what you've seen?

Yeah... but that's fine, isn't it? I think Resident Evil 5 doesn't need to change the series, but Resident Evil 6 will have to reinvent the series with another full model change or else it won't be able to keep on going.

Do you plan to play Resident Evil 5?

I probably won't play it. I won't like it, because it's not going to be the game I would have made. It'll just cause me stress if I play it. I think it could be fun for gamers to play it, but not for someone who has developed Resident Evil games. If I see anything in Resident Evil 5 that isn't done well, I'll be angry! [Laughs]

What's interested you recently?

Prison Break and the new Battlestar Galactica. Oh, and Gears Of War. I was at a dinner recently and the director of Gears [Cliff Bleszinski] was there – I couldn't believe how serious he was. Even though it was a party, he was constantly working. I was surprised, because he's not Japanese! Everyone else was drinking and eating, but he was constantly talking about work.

What has been the greatest moment in your career so far?

Seeing the success of the first *Resident Evil*. Thanks to that, Capcom didn't go under and was able to stay in business. I'm glad it survived. If *Resident Evil* hadn't been a success, Capcom would have been finished. The investors were beginning to get worried.

What's your favourite idea that never made it into a game?

It was a shame that the scenario for *Resident Evil* changed completely. The setting I came up with initially started out like *Lost*. It began inside an aeroplane, and when the camera cut to the passengers you could see that they were all handcuffed. There was some really bad-looking type piloting the plane. Eventually it crashed, and then zombies appeared at the crash site. All of the passengers were criminals.

How do you see the current generation of consoles stacking up?

PS3 and Xbox 360 are similar; I want them to become one unified system. Having both of these systems is such a waste. Wii is completely different, though, so I think it's fine for that to continue. It would be good if the 360 hardware could be fitted inside PS3 case somehow. [Laughs]





Blowin'

Operation Flashpoint 2: Dragon Rising is the
most realistic shooter ever made. But will it be
too hardcore for the Call Of Duty crowd?



feature

Operation Flashpoint 2: Dragon Rising

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WORLD
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Official Magazine UK



Future of war

Behind the scenes with the dev team reinventing the shooter

Minutes into the tour of Codemasters' Leamington Spa studio I'm being shown a render of a sniper rifle. Nothing unusual there – it's one of 70 weapons in Operation Flashpoint 2's kit bag – but it's the weirdly fetishistic level of authenticity that's different. Every bolt, switch and rivet is accurate. Even the stuff you can't see, like the bullet feed, has been modelled realistically. And the same approach applies to everything on the battlefield, from the armoured vehicles to the leaves on the trees. This is a whole new breed of shooter.

The original Operation Flashpoint was a PC shooter that also strove for realism and found itself embraced by servicemen and gun nuts, who formed a passionate community for the game. Now the franchise is coming to consoles, it's our turn to find out just how real a shooter can feel, or as senior producer Brant Nicholas prefers: "a hyper-real sandbox-war first-person shooter."

One thing that *isn't* real is the setting: it's a fictional island off the coast of Japan called Skira – 220km² of swamps, grassland and forests. It's peppered with abandoned Soviet-era buildings, ruined forts and monasteries, making it the perfect shooter playground. Oh, and it's oozing with oil, hence Skira's sudden popularity with the world's superpowers.

You start as a grunt on a cushy detail, as part of a token force sent by the US to keep an eye on the island. Then the People's Liberation Army of China attacks, and it all gets explosive. As the conflict progresses you follow orders, working your way up the ranks until it's you who's dishing out the commands.

Flash, bang, what a picture

Seeing the game on screen is like watching the climactic battle scene of a big-budget war movie. The first screenshots were so shiny and sharp that it seemed impossible Codemasters would be able to deliver the same quality in-game. The developer responded that same thing had been said about *Race Driver Grid*. And in truth, Flashpoint 2 is damn close to the dirty beauty of those early images.



"It's a hyper-real, sandbox-war, first-person shooter."

Lead designer Mike Smith explains: "The public perception of war isn't from fighting in the trenches any more; it's from seeing it on Sky." Hence the high-contrast war reportage style, mixed with the muted hues of modern war movies.

Looking this good isn't easy. A team of 70 has worked on the weapons for two years. The research team alone generated over 400GB of photos, manuals and illustrations. The range and fire power of every gun is perfect, and even the wear and tear has been carefully researched to make sure scratches occur in the right places. What's more, this authenticity has a significant knock-on effect on how Flashpoint 2 plays, as lead AI designer Clive Lindop tells us: "The gameplay balance takes care of itself because in the real world a weapon is developed to counter something else, so if your ballistics and your bullet calibrations are all accurate not only are the fans happy but the gameplay balance develops organically."

It's hard to imagine that a team this thorough would ever make a mistake, but when it does, the passionate Flashpoint

community act as a fail safe. The team knows that the fans will be first to point out mistakes, so it keeps an open dialogue with them via the forums. Recently their military-minded fans spotted a helicopter-related mess up (the team had committed the crime of assigning an army helicopter to the Marines). They've also kept them in the loop on camouflage. The US Army has updated its pixel-style camo three times since work began on the game, so the uniforms have been altered to match.

Advance wars

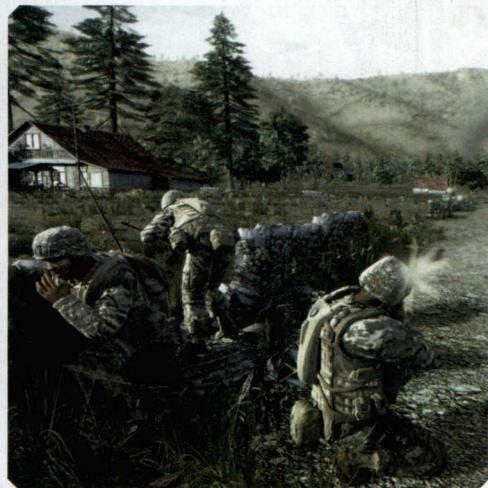
So it's going to look chillingly real, but how will it play? Not easily. "You don't get shot at five feet with a shotgun in modern war," explains Nicholas. So, no more carrying around ten weapons in magic pockets; or regenerating health. You don't just whip a Javelin anti-tank missile out of your pocket; it takes time to assemble and only comes with one very heavy round. You'll need to use the right ammo with the right weapon to have a hope of taking out anything armoured. And no more pumping machine gun rounds into tanks until they pop. That'll just get you sent home in a jar.



▀ Helicopters overhead are a welcome sight... provided they're yours.



▀ What type of leader will you be?
Brave, reckless, or out and out cowardly?



083

Get shot and if you're lucky, you'll bleed. Get hit somewhere vital and it's curtains, instantly. Even if you're bleeding you've only got a limited amount of time to get to a medic before you're just another corpse on the modern battlefield. It's hard to imagine how even the most battle-scarred COD4 player is going to handle that sort of brutality. Nicholas insists that the missions will ease first-time players into service, though.

And be thankful for that, because the enemy isn't going to go soft on you. Lindop compares their AI to an American football playbook. It has a whole host of real-world military tactics, and it can read the situation on the battlefield, then apply a suitable strategy. When an attack isn't working, the AI is smart enough to abort it and try something new. Operation Flashpoint 2 doesn't just make COD4 look like kids stuff. It brings a new age of weaponry, vehicles, guns and authenticity. Play time is over, gentlemen. ▶



▀ Each weapon is accurate down to the HUD you'll see when you're taking aim.



Tools of destruction

Rummaging through Flashpoint's kit bag



■ M67

Hand grenade

Make sure you're five metres away from this pineapple when it blows. If you like your legs.



■ M107 Night Ops

Anti-Material rifle Known as the 'light fifty', this super-long range sniper rifle was voted one of 2005's top ten military inventions.

■ MK 16 MOD 0

SCAR US Spec Ops Command held a competition to find a new assault rifle. This brute was the winner.



■ SMAW

Shoulder-launched Multipurpose Assault Weapon The anti-armour rocket launcher used by the US and China.



■ MK 13 MOD 0

Assault rifle A favourite of the US Special Ops Command it's the SCAR upgraded with an optional grenade launcher.



■ MK 48 MOD 0

Marksman The fully automatic light machine gun used by US Spec Ops.



■ M249

Squad Automatic Weapon

The Mike Tyson of guns. Powerful, but unreliable – most models are over a decade old.



■ FGM148

Javelin

This anti-tank guided missile is hefty – it weighs around 50lbs – but was a major part of the 2003 invasion of Iraq.



■ TYPE 2004 RPG

Type 2004 This Chinese version of the RPG 7 grenade launcher breaks into two parts for easy transportation.



■ FIM-92

Stinger anti-aircraft missile

This shoulder-launched missile was made in 1981 and has notched up 270 confirmed aircraft kills.



AAVP-7A1

Am Truck 23 tonnes of fugly amphibious troop transport you wouldn't want to do a peace protest in front of.



M1025

Armament Carrier The multi-tasking Humvee isn't just for rappers – over 10,000 were used in Iraq in 2003 alone.



M1A2

Abrams Tusk Recently upgraded for urban environments, it has depleted uranium armour and a 41.5 mph top speed.



TYPE 95

PGZ 95 The PLA's anti-aircraft solution, designed to defend vulnerable infantrymen.



ZBD2000 ATGM

ZLC 2000 The armoured amphibious vehicle that launches at sea then swims to shore.



LAV-25

LAV Based on the Swiss Mowag Piranha, it's an armoured personnel carrier that packs a turret.

Ground vehicles Killing machines



M2A3

Bradley APC Bring an IT manager – under the camo bonnet are some super high-tech battlefield electronics.

UH-60

Black Hawk Rattles along at 183mph and each one costs \$5.9m. And yes, that's Black Hawk as in 'down'.



Aerial vehicles Death from above



AH-1Z

Attack helicopter The twin engine 'Viper' has a top speed of 184mph, and packs Hellfire missiles – familiar from many a videogame.



MI-17a

Ground attack MI-17 variant with added rocket launchers, machine guns and, presumably, leather seats.



MI-17

HIP Russian-designed and used by China, this 156mph bird is favoured in Malaysia for search and rescue missions.



PTBR

Small Unit Riverine Craft A Chinese patrol boat used for fast attacks and deploying special forces troops quickly.



SURC

Small Unit Riverine Craft A light and speedy US patrol boat that packs three machine guns but no beer cooler.

Nautical vehicles Wet and wild



Scenes of battle

On the hills and grasslands of Skira island, thousands of soldiers struggle for victory



Spearhead

Here you're trying to cover Charlie Team, the men advancing over the hills on the horizon. UH-60 Black Hawks hover over the Chinese forces so your rifle squad are safe to lay down some covering fire. Man up, they're relying on you!



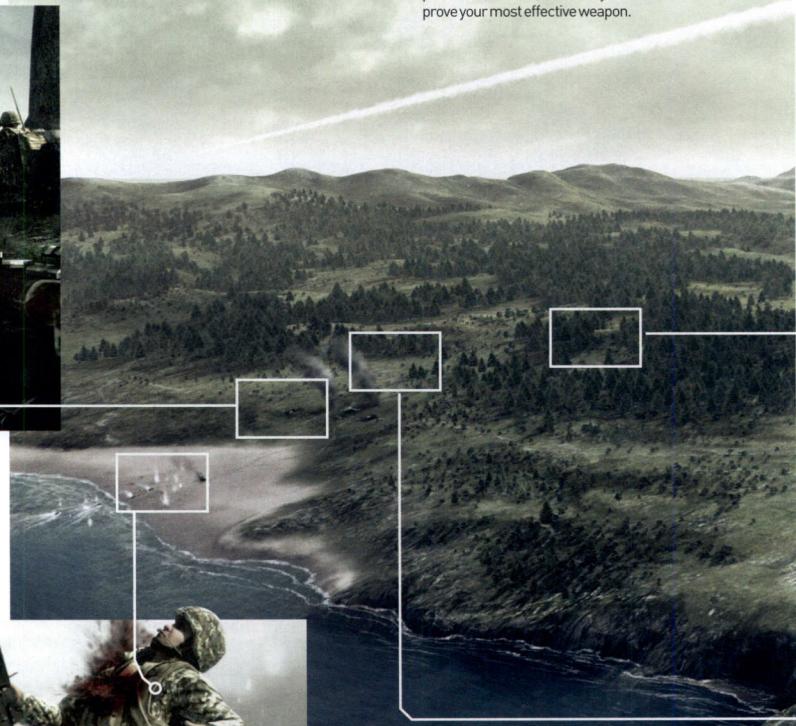
Beachhead

Sometimes Intelligence gets it wrong. You and your men went ashore at Bravo beach expecting to find nothing but sand and sea shells, but the minute you hit land your team is torn apart by machine-gun fire. There's nothing to do but try and take out the nest, charging through the bullet storm towards the gunner's location. Thank god the AAVPZAs (that's amphibious assault vehicles, to you) are there to back you up.



► Tourist board

Welcome to Skira, home to steep hills, miles of coastline, open fields, thick woods and an extinct volcano. The island is designed to offer maximum combat variety, and each type of terrain will need its own set of tactics. The tanks might be your ally on the open grasslands, but in the patches of thick forest infantry will prove your most effective weapon.



Skira island
Conflict hot spot located north of Japan



► Island hopping

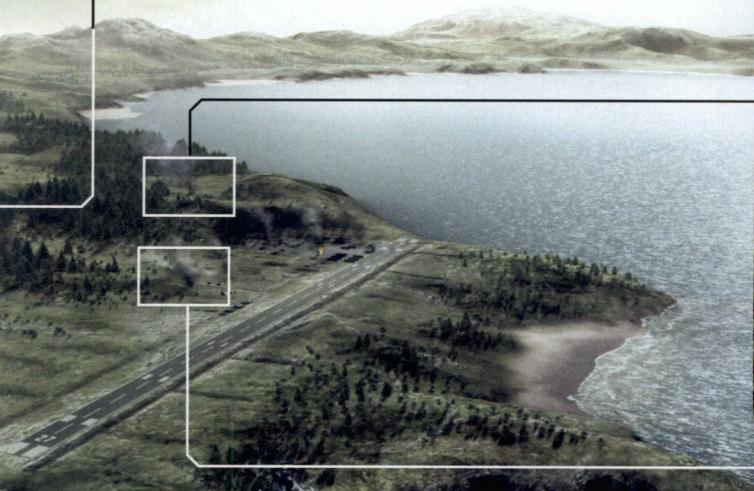
Skira is fictional, but the terrain is based on NASA data from the Aleutian island of Kiska, found off the coast of Alaska.





Foothold

You and your fellow marines have found cover in a bombed-out Chinese building, but the decaying concrete walls can't hold out against rifles and grenades. The PLA infantry launch an assault, and all you can do is dig in, keep your heads down and use your rifles to dish out as much suppressing fire as you can.



Airfield assault

A medic tries to patch up a wounded soldier while the battle rages overhead. Capturing the airfield is essential so that fresh troops, supplies and equipment can be flown in, but the PLA isn't going quietly. You'll need helicopters, Javelin missile launchers and ground troops to break the perimeter of APCs.



The thin red line

All too aware of the helicopters raining death on their troops, the People's Liberation Army prepares to launch a new offensive on the US forces. One team makes a break towards the armoured personnel carriers, while another loads its RPG with a devastating HEAT round – a High Explosive Anti-Tank warhead.

UH-60

The action isn't just happening on the ground. Air support is provided courtesy of Black Hawk helicopters that can use their machine guns to provide cover fire for the vulnerable ground troops.





Interview

Senior producer Brant Nicholas talks guns, tanks, blood – and why realism matters in a shooter

OPM How would you differentiate Operation Flashpoint 2 from other shooters, such as Call Of Duty 4?

Brant Nicholas Most importantly, we have this huge sandbox world to run around in, with many paths to victory. But in many ways, we would differentiate based on what Flashpoint is NOT. It is not a lone wolf game; you not only fight as part of a larger team, but you will also have opportunity to command squads of four, eight, 12, 20 or more men. It's not a twitch shooter. You will frequently need to think your way out of tactical problems or you will probably get sent home in a pinewood box.

Unlike many tunnel-shooters out there, Operation Flashpoint 2 is not shot on a Hollywood stage. Contrary to popular belief, the most deadly weapon in the world is not an angry German Shepherd. **Tanks aren't whittled down piecemeal by gunfire or knife-strikes; your weapons either penetrate the tank's armour or they don't.** The combat model we use gives real-world choices, not movie conventions.

While we do work hard to ease the player into the game's unique style of play, when compared with other titles, it's not a merciful game. Your body armour can stop slugs, but one hit on an unprotected place could very well kill you. It's important to know that Operation Flashpoint 2 is not an arcade game, and the enemies are smart enough to kill you before you kill them.

OPM You're dedicated to recreating every detail of modern warfare, why is realism so important to the game?

BN Many combat games follow conventions set down by the early shooter titles to the

point that no one questions them any more. Why do tanks have hit points? They don't have hit points in real life. **Why are grenades like mini-nukes?** Real grenades are more likely to maim than kill. Why don't bad guys duck and withdraw when you shoot at them? Real firefights are about firepower dominance and breaking the other side's will to continue.

We think that more realistic combat makes for more interesting and fun challenges for the player. It's not that realism is more brutal (in fact, if anything, Operation Flashpoint 2 highlights how well-protected the modern infantry soldier is). The realisation quickly settles in that our combat is *different* to shooter combat experienced in other games. We want to break new ground and move away from old, stale stereotypes. We believe there are lots of exciting challenges still out there for players who want to embrace something new rather than rinse and repeat old formulaic game mechanics that they've done a hundred times before.

OPM How far does the realism extend to things like wounds and the horrors of war?

BN The quest for realism has been a defining factor in our art from the very beginning. Our goal is to be realistic, but not gratuitous. There aren't bits of soldiers flying about all over the place without good reason.

Different munitions have different effects depending on what they are and where they hit. We have done our best to stay faithful to that throughout. If something hits you that would blow a limb off in real life then it does so in Operation Flashpoint 2. That said, this proved challenging for our artists in having to research some nasty stuff, but not

doing this part of the game justice would just dumb it down – which we refused to do. We would rather the true nature of war is shown (within limits) without this turning into some Hollywood flick.

One example of how we've done our best to hold to this is that soldiers can be struck by a bullet or shrapnel in a non-fatal way. When this happens, one of the (many) systems that gets triggered off actually has the soldier bleed where hit. The hit-specific blood will then seep into their clothes and out from behind armour if applicable. It's an effect that adds to the quality of the game without being 'over the top'. Trust us when we say that you can see (and hear) when a soldier is wounded and in need of a medic.

OPM Have you had much help from the American military in regards to access to plans for weapons, tactics, or information?

BN Members of the American military with ranks up to Colonel have been involved in many aspects of our game including the campaign, game dialogue and AI among

other things. We've also used field-guides published by the US military in setting the ground rules and plays for the AI to adhere to which we would say constitutes a huge help in getting the AI to use real-world tactics in just about any situation. The more time we invest in it, the more realistic these tactics become.

OPM What's the thing you've spent the most time researching, and what's the strangest?

BN The strangest things we've researched? Perhaps the Chinese webbing used for packs carried by the soldiers. We were half way through when The People's Liberation

Think tank

Modern tanks are heavily armoured vehicles that come equipped with electronic gadgetry to keep the crew and the tank itself safe from enemy missiles, grenades and friendly fire. They're designed to take a beating and still keep rolling. For example, there are no reports of Abrams tanks being totally destroyed by enemy fire. One tale even tells of how an Abrams became hopelessly entrenched in mud, so the army decided to use another one to blast it to pieces. Even at close range their rounds were unable to destroy the forsaken tank.



Fire in the hole

Its effects are devastating, but the word grenade actually comes from the French for Pomegranate. Not because of its shape or size, but because of the way the shrapnel resembles the fruit's seeds. Modern frag grenades like the M67 can distribute this shrapnel over a radius of 200m, although you'd have to be within about 15m to be seriously injured by the blast. They're often used to construct booby traps which armies can leave behind, although this practice is frowned upon as it can kill innocent civilians years after a conflict. The Ottawa treaty was introduced to ban the practice, but so far both The People's Liberation Army of China and the USA have refused to sign.



Brains as well as brawn

You'll rarely be working alone, and as you progress in the game you'll command larger and larger squads. A derivative of the original PC Flashpoint title called VBS1 is used to teach real military tactics, so you can be sure that the enemies you're facing and the men by your side know what they're doing. As well as taking advice from military advisors about jargon and tactics, the team used audio recordings from the battlefield to make sure the troops don't just look tough, but talk the talk too.



Army announced a new range of uniforms. Some squaddie-strength expletives were heard around the studio when we discovered that, since we had to re-work a great many of our game assets.

OPM The fact that there are no hit points and no regenerating health makes this sound like an astoundingly hardcore game. How can you balance it to make sure that it's still fun for players?

BN Well, it's massively fun having all the assets of the modern military to play with – a world of cutting-edge, ludicrously dangerous, mind-bogglingly expensive kit is at your disposal and it all works as it would in real life. That's awesome. Our focus on all this high-powered equipment and our intelligent AI is that we want the player to feel more vulnerable than in other shooters and consider their options rather than running and gunning. They won't be able to sprint into the middle of a firefight, take lots of damage and then run away to a corner until their hit points or shield has replenished. The first time a hardcore arcade player does this, they'll realise that OFP2 is a different kind of shooter and most likely end up dead very fast. That said, it will only take once for them to learn. **True to the original Flashpoint this is the thinking gamer's shooter!** We are trying to be realistic. And in the real world, modern body armour has pretty impressive stopping power. Unlike the original Flashpoint, which was set in the '80s, with Cold War-era equipment, the new game benefits from the fact that the infantryman is better protected and we take that armour into account, each with unique properties and protection values.

Nonetheless, in the end, this is not some

Saving for a rainy day

Forget the luxury of finding a checkpoint every two metres. The original Operation Flashpoint had a notoriously brutal save system that meant players could save their progress at any time, but only once per mission. Each mission lasted from around half an hour to an hour, so saving too early could mean replaying huge chunks of the action, no matter how close to completing your objective you had been. Combining that with Flashpoint 2's improved AI and shoot-to-kill policy and you've got a recipe for heartbreak. Players even devised cheats that required delving into the game's files and deleting old saves to try and find a way round the harsh setup. Lead AI programmer Clive Lindop suggested this feature might return for the console versions, but would be tied to the higher difficulty modes.



full-body suit of power armour we're talking about. **Our goal is to help put the fear of dying back into gamers that have long become numb to the cost of modern warfare.** It's that adrenaline rush as you hear the bullets whizzing by your head that keeps players coming back for more.

OPM What are the most important skills a Flashpoint player can have? Tactics? Stealth? Accuracy?

BN All skills will help, however tactics is probably the most important. If you keep your men alive they'll keep you alive. Our AI is truly formidable. Obviously, for some of the special ops missions a stealthy approach will be advantageous and your shooting ability will give you an edge as you pick off your enemies, but overall tactics and ability to command the men in your charge will be your best weapon fighting against the advanced AI.

OPM You seem to have a really close relationship with the Flashpoint community, and its members are quick to point out any mistakes you make. Are their opinions and ideas changing the way you make the game in any other ways?

BN We're really passionate about upholding the hopes of our Community. As a result, multiplayer numbers are a big focus across multiple areas of the development team at the moment. We're trying to meet the high expectations of the community, but it's a difficult dilemma as increasing numbers in one area may force us to sacrifice in others. Our focus on fidelity is really important.

Tracking and managing all of the data surrounding all of the players in our high-fidelity sandbox world is at the core of how

many users can receive all of the updates in every second of gameplay. The old methods of achieving high numbers might break the immersion of our game, so we're literally wrangling over every processor cycle to try and squeeze more through the network pipe than has ever been achieved before.

OPM What have been the challenges of developing such a massive game for PS3?

BN PS3 is an incredibly powerful machine with a wide variety of technical features that we've been able to leverage in the making of Operation Flashpoint 2. Making effective use of its power has taken a significant effort from our teams, especially when cramming a huge, highly detailed island into available memory all at once. The SPEs [the Cell chip's Synergistic Processing Elements] and Blu-ray disc only available on PS3 have proven invaluable for this.

OPM Are there any political complications that come with presenting such a plausible warfare scenario?

BN No complications for us. The Chinese fans on the forums have been a great source of help and advice. However, with the world becoming an increasingly tense place we do worry how much our game might mirror reality.

OPM What combat advice would you give to players who are first-time visitors to the Flashpoint battlefield?

BN Duck. No, really. **I SAID GET DOWN, SOLDIER! HOLD THAT RIFLE STRAIGHT AND SHOOT!**



Flash back

Operation Flashpoint: Cold War Crisis was a tactical FPS created by Czech developer Bohemia Interactive Studio. Even years after its release the game still has an active community, a dedicated wiki (snipurl.com/3oibm) and fan modders who have created conversions that set the conflict in the American Civil War and introduce extraterrestrials and space craft. Bohemia Interactive Studio has since developed a library of expansion packs, an unofficial sequel to Flashpoint called Arma: Armed Assault (a sequel is due out in 2009) and, in conjunction with the US marines, VBS1 – a military simulation training tool that is currently employed by US government organisations for training.



War machine

When it comes to fitting the intricately detailed island of Skira onto a disc, Blu-ray has the advantage of being able to hold up to 50GB of data, compared to the 8.5GB of the double-layered DVDs used by Xbox 360. It's not just about storage space though, the PS3's super-powered Cell processor plays a big part too. The development team is able to assign the Cell's seven SPEs [Synergistic Processing Elements] to different tasks – so one might be responsible for enemy AI, while another handles physics calculations – which, when carefully coded for, results in improved performance. Throw in PS3's RSX Reality Synthesizer graphics processing unit, and you've got the perfect machine for making Codemasters' darkest shooter dreams a reality.

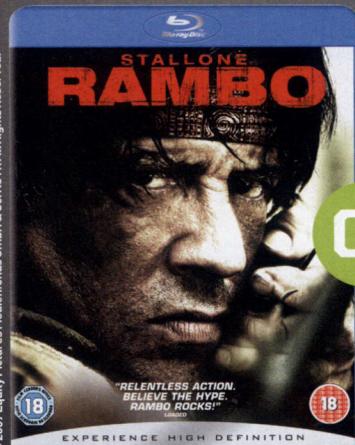


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The OPM review setup



Our review code is tested on hi-def and standard-def TVs to ensure we know how games perform at both ends of the scale. Our HD setup is a 70" Sony Bravia with Dolby Digital 5.1 surround sound.



PlayStation® Official Magazine - UK

Reviews

Your essential guide to every new release

The first thing you think when you've got to grips with LittleBigPlanet is 'why hasn't anyone done this before?' It seems so obvious – the adorable sackboys, the wires-bared building mode, the creativity and community. Why make endless games about guns and driving and sports when you can do this? It's a watershed, something we'll all look back on and pinpoint as the start of a whole new way of enjoying gaming.

Unless we're all too busy playing guns and driving and sports, of course – right after LBP we review PES 2009. It's getting tougher to make the call between Konami's long-time table-topper and rival FIFA, but we did our best by playing it for ages. Then we've got shooting thanks to Brothers In Arms and the awesomely generic Fracture, and driving in the form of off-road racer Pure. We've even squeezed in some Jedi-ing with the better-than-we-initially-feared Force Unleashed. All in all, quite a month, but don't get too cosy because next issue is looking huge.



LITTLEBIGPLANET

The closest thing to perfection on PS3 is made of stitches, wood and fire. Find out why you *need* LBP in our world exclusive review.



PES 2009

Let the endless niggling begin. 'It's just like last year's but fixed,' 'It feels like real football, innit,' 'WHY DIDN'T THE JUST SODDING CATCH IT?'



STAR WARS: THE FORCE UNLEASHED

Happily this Sith-em-up is much improved over the X-Wing crash that we previewed a couple of months back. Still hate the main character, though.

How we score our reviews...

10 Essential

Instant classic that's as close as it gets to PlayStation perfection.

9 Outstanding

Highly recommended, and an investment you won't regret.

8 Very good

Mostly excellent, but held back by one or two minor flaws.

7 Good

Enjoyable, but with definite room for improvement. Rent it first.

6 Reasonable

A decent offering, but one that only satisfies in places.

5 Average

A game that is both fun and frustrating in equal measure.

4 Below average

Too flawed to be anything more than a brief curiosity.

3 Poor

A seriously flawed game with no long-term appeal.

2 Awful

A disgrace to the bargain bin. Avoid it as you would a bullet.

1 Horrific

Buy this shocker and watch your console self-combust in protest.



Our highest accolade

The gold award is presented to any game that we feel demonstrates significant innovation, near flawless gameplay, great graphics and profound appeal.



review PS3

LittleBigPlanet

littleBIG Planet™



PlayStation. Official Magazine USA

Perfectly crafted

LittleBigPlanet

The best game on PS3 is the one you make



Info

Format PS3 ETA 31 October Pub Sony Dev Media Molecule Players 1-4 Web littlebigplanet.com It's like The first time you connected two Lego bricks and realised you could make *anything*.

It starts here. All the sleepless nights, the head scratching; jumping out of bed at three in the morning because you've just realised how to make a tank that fires corks. The limitless creative potential contained within LittleBigPlanet means you'll be scribbling level designs on the back of your hand so you don't forget them. Or breaking off, mid-conversation, to stare blankly into space as the penny drops on how to make a rampaging robot. A big one. LBP gives you the ability to create *anything*. And, yes, whatever you've just thought of – that too.

There are three main parts to LBP. A surprisingly huge and brilliant single-player mode, the online community – where people can share creations and play together – and the create mode. This last one is the main attraction and it's where you'll be spending most of your time; building anything from a place to hang out online, simple toys like catapults and entire games with enemies, levels, stories and boss battles.

Different worlds

You're not just limited to rearranging pre-formed pieces or cutting and pasting from a bag of bits (although there is a comprehensive array of fully-formed objects to dip into). You can build anything and everything from scratch using a wide range of materials, motors, pistons and switches. What's amazing is how simple

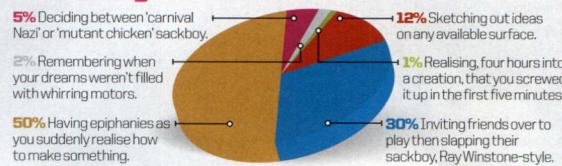


the act of creation is – the tools are basic and easy to use but the results can be as complicated or as simple as you want.

Select My Moon, LBP's creative space, and you'll find your little sackboy floating in an empty level – a blank canvas for whatever's lurking in your mind. Tapping @ brings up the Popit menu. Here you'll find the Popit Cursor, a sort of neon lasso you can use to grab and manipulate objects, and the Goodies and Tools sub menus. Goodies provides materials



What you do in... LBP



LittleBigPlanet is all about creation. You can make anything. And it's even better when your mates join in.



▲ Everything you see in LBP, you can build yourself. Even this monstrosity.



▲ Stickers, like this sun, can be slapped on to brighten up any of your creations.

such as wood, metal and cloth, and objects like wheels, lights and decorations, while Tools provides all the mechanical gizmos that we'll get to later.

Block it out

Building simply involves picking a substance and a shape – a square, circle or triangle, say – stretching or rotating it



▲ This balloon is one of the best pre-made objects in the game. It's steered by little jets.

into whatever form you want, then hitting **X** to make it. It's that easy. Materials have physical properties and react believably to gravity and other objects. Felt is soft, polystyrene is light, rubber grips (making it great for wheels) and glass is slippery. Everything's incredibly tangible and tactile – it's a physical, palpable process of construction.



▲ "Curse you Athena! Why do you darn me!"

Just slapping down shapes won't get you far without Tools. These are the technical bits that make everything work. There are motors, pistons, explosives, lethal spikes and even simple AI brains to control enemies. Switches are the most important device. They're your main way of controlling creations. A sensor switch, for example, can be set to open a door when your sackboy nears it. Or you could operate an elevator by pulling a lever.

There are also cameras that can be placed to tilt the viewpoint. One level has an Indiana Jones-style boulder to escape, with the camera mounted on the rock itself so that the view swings back to show it looming behind you.

Five great gadgets



MOTORS

They drive everything in LBP. The basic model simply spins and is perfect for wheels. There are also oscillating 'wobbly' ones – ideal for bringing characters to life.



PISTONS

Use these to make platforms that move up and down or left and right. Add the 'flipper' function and they also make springboards that fire sackboy across a level.



SWITCHES

There are several variants – buttons, levers, sensors and 'key and lock'. They can be wired to motors or pistons and set to turn them on, control speed and so on.



EMITTERS

Emitters spawn things. It could be a pre-made object like a bomb or something you created – a flaming rock makes an excellent bullet, for example.



MOUTHS

Attach them to a character you've made and you can type in text to appear when a player triggers it and even adjust the camera angle for a simple cut-scene.



The golden moment is when you realise how you can link these simple parts together to create something amazing. It's as if a mist clears to reveal infinite possibility. A great example is an early boss you encounter in one of the single-player levels. He's basically a

cardboard cutout, decorated to look like a thug carrying a gun, and moved around by a piston. Attached to the weapon is an 'emitter' – a device that spawns any object you tell it to. In this case, they're burning logs which are fired out like bullets. To defeat him you have to pull a little trampoline around to bounce the projectiles back. Hit the switch attached to his feet and he'll blow apart, triggering

another switch that opens a door and finishes the level. It's no more than a handful of wooden blocks and triggers, but encountering this boss is the exact moment you begin to comprehend that the things you make can be so much more than the sum of their parts.

"LBP's masterstroke is to make creation accessible to anyone."

Don't be scared if you think it sounds like hard work. LBP's masterstroke is to make this creative world accessible to anyone, at any level. Everything is clearly laid out, logical and simple to understand. Switches hook up to motors with big chunky wires (which can be hidden when you play the game). The item options are easy-to-grasp concepts like 'speed', to control how fast a motor turns, or



While levels are 2D, there's no limit to the scale or direction of your construction.

'strength', to dictate how powerful it is – so a heavy stone wheel will need more oomph to turn than a rubber one. And, as you tweak values, clear on-screen prompts show the results.

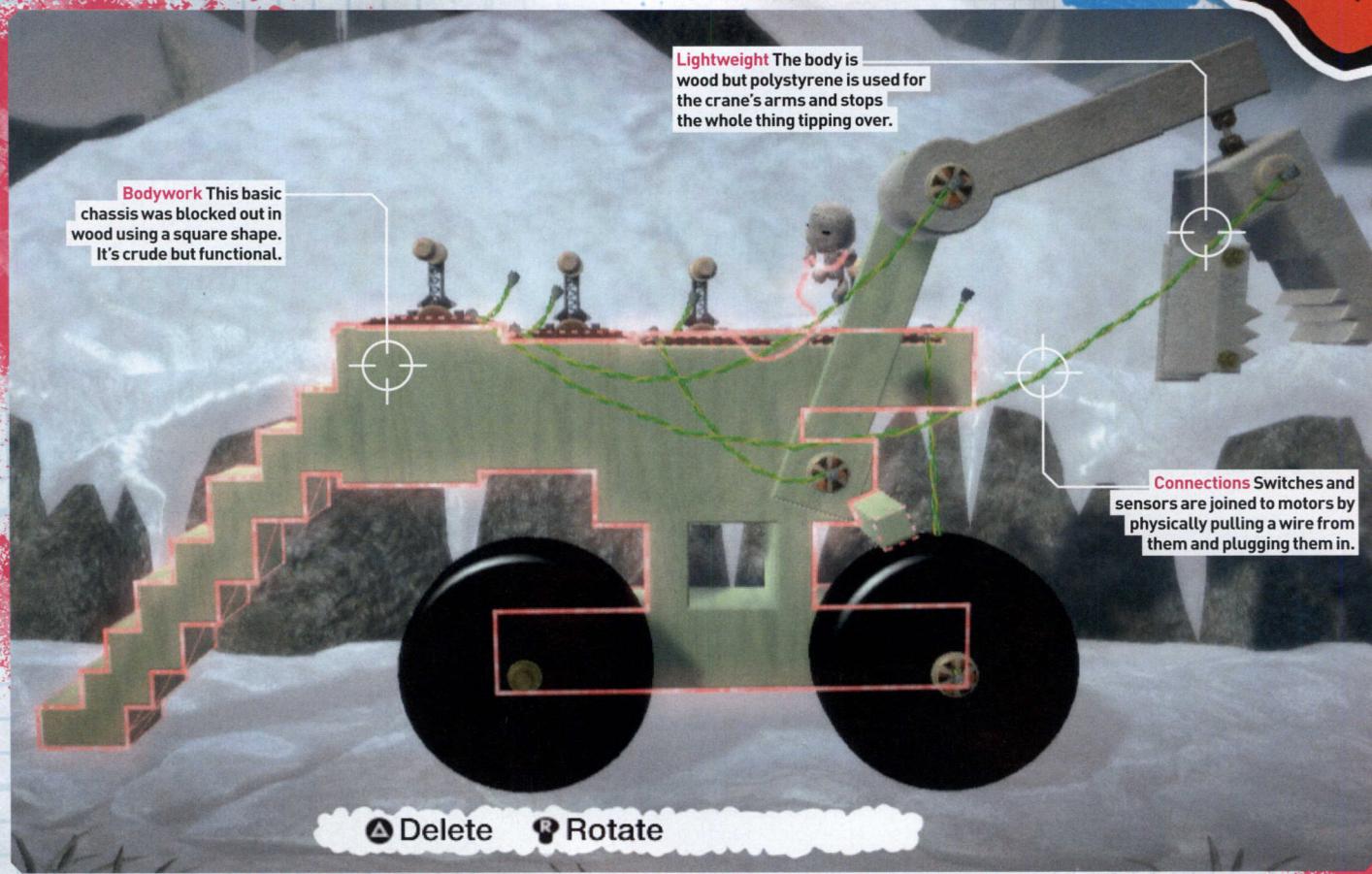
Insert tab A

There's a comprehensive set of tutorials, deliciously narrated by Stephen Fry, that explain everything. The downside is that there's an interactive lesson for just about everything, and you can't use an object until you've completed its training level. Each individual lesson isn't exactly a chore in itself, but there are *loads*. As a result progression during the first few hours feels excruciatingly ratcheted out, one click at a time. Pitching the learning curve for something as unique as LBP was never going to be easy but covering every conceivable facet of construction, one step at a time, can be infuriatingly slow if you're a fast learner. The option for a quick text explanation as an alternative would have been good.

The Compel-o-Graph

The highs and lows of LittleBigPlanet





"Our first level was a Tomb Raider-style platformer full of spike pits."

Get through the educational water torture and you can start to get your hands dirty by banging the basic building blocks together. Creation is an incredibly intuitive process. We built our first level on day one – a Tomb Raider-style platformer full of burning trees with spinning branches to dodge and spike-filled pits to swing over. The climax was a large wrecking ball on a chain, held in place with explosives. Grabbing it

triggered switches wired to blast it free, letting it swing down and smash through a wall of loose bricks as sackboy clung on for dear life. It took a few hours to create and less than a minute to play, but the sense of accomplishment was phenomenal. There's an honest-to-God butterfly-like tremble of excitement to making something that never goes away. If there is a shortfall it's that your creative urges are trapped within LBP's cutesy



■ We made this crane to pick up sackboys. Actually, it was more sort of 'crush', really.

boundaries. Whatever you make will invariably look adorable. So no serious or scary games, unless you want to use ghosts that make Caspar seem R-rated. But it's all so charming, that only the coldest heart would complain.

You do have to be careful though. Occasionally and inexplicably something,

 <p>Sackphilia You'll spend hours pulling faces, dancing and customising your new fabric friends.</p>	 <p>Building stuff There really is no limit to what you can create. Making stuff is an addictive and hugely rewarding process.</p>	 <p>Exploring Seeing what other people have built is fun, educational and scary. All at once. It's the best way to get new ideas too.</p>
LOVING HATING		
Overload LBP can feel like a construction-based game of Buckaroo. The slightest tweak or addition can spell disaster.		



You can build things from scratch or dip into a Goodyes Bag full of objects and toys...



...like these drums, which will make great platforms to jump between, avoiding rocks below.



To make it more risky you can lethasise objects. In this case setting the rocks on fire.

somewhere will go wrong. The in-game physics can explode into apoplectic spasms should one solid object accidentally pass into another as you edit. Watching a section of your beautiful creation violently flip into the air and land upside down because you turned a motor just a tad too high is a horrible sinking feeling. The ability to undo almost any mistake, almost back to a blank canvas, is therefore an absolute godsend. Especially as no matter how careful you are, there are still the odd



The best sackboys

How you dress says a lot about who you are



TIM'S

My main role in the review process was to break whatever Leon had built the previous night, so it seemed appropriate to dress my sackgentleman like a death-eyed gremlin. Fear me, burlap world!

Skin	Tree
Eyes	White neon eyes
Head	Cute lion ears, lion nose
Hair	None
Feet	Trainers
Accessories	None



LEON'S

I'm basically going for a feline Bruce Lee kind of vibe. The Game Of Death/Kill Bill jump suit is an instantly recognisable outfit while the hair just looks cool. In retrospect the pink Converse were a mistake.

Skin	Brown leather
Eyes	Button
Head	Lion nose, scary teeth
Hair	Lion's mane
Feet	Trainers
Accessories	Dollar sign necklace



RACHEL'S

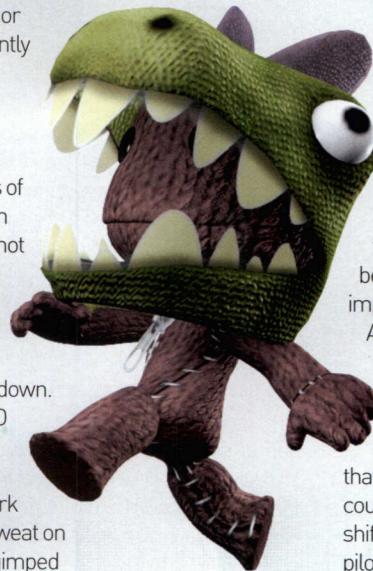
Part twinkly fairy, part tribal princess, it's a look I expect to see on the catwalks any time now. The bandana/neckerchief is only there because Leon's sackboy kept slapping me whenever I tried to take it off.

Skin	White burlap
Eyes	Cartoon
Head	Pink cat nose
Hair	Pink hair with feathers
Feet	Trainers
Accessories	Cowboy bandana, wand

incomprehensible cock-ups – wires that detach for no apparent reason or pistons that suddenly and violently rattle everything to pieces.

Hard copies

It's at times like these that the ability to save multiple versions of a level is sorely missed. You can create copies of a creation but not make backups as you go, and the larger and more complex your work of art, the more likely that an otherwise minor tweak can bring it all crashing down. So if you are going to make a 2D version of the Iliad then be prepared to spend plenty of time crawling through your work with a torch in your teeth and sweat on your brow, as you hunt for the gimped



connection that's ruining everything. How you feel about this will play a crucial part in determining how much you're going to enjoy LBP. For the patient, the sporadic glitches and effort

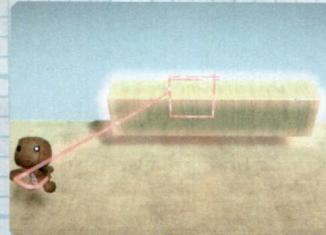
spent debugging will be a means to an end, while for others, the first time a level catastrophically implodes will also be the last. Given the scale and complexity of what can be achieved, though, overall it's an impressively robust system.

And this is never more apparent than when you see the astounding things Media Molecule has created with it.

There's a fully formed game to be enjoyed, with characters and a plot that involves helping 'The Creators'. You could be driving a car through a series of shifting ramps before entering a race. Or piloting a hot air balloon by firing little

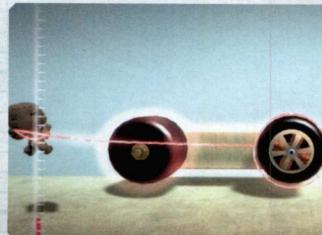
How to build a simple car

Building your own wheels takes seconds. Making it look cool might take longer...



Build a body

First create a chassis. It can be any size as long as it's only one or two blocks deep and big enough to stand on. Use something light like wood or it'll never go anywhere.



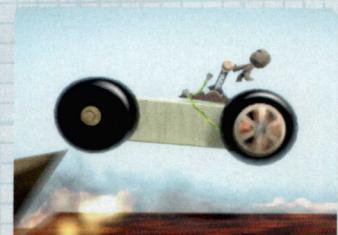
Get some wheels

Make the wheels by creating a rubber circle and copying it once. Make sure the body is off the ground and attach one wheel with a normal bolt and the second with a motorised one.



Take control

Put a three-way switch on top of your car and connect the wire to the motorised bolt. Set the switch to 'directional' so that you have 'forward', 'stop' and 'reverse'.



Go for a test drive

Pushing or pulling the switch will now make you move around. You'll need to tweak the motor's speed and strength to get it just how you want it. All that's left now is to pimp your ride...





jets. Elsewhere you'll be scaling a beautiful statue of a blue-skinned Indian deity who slowly rises and falls through a yoga pose; tiny whirring motors on his knees and elbows driving the whole process. There are incredible feats of

This story mode alone is reason enough to buy LBP, even if you're unsure of your potential as the next Jaffa or Kojima. The quality is flawless. The beautiful levels mix action, challenge and wonder in a way that makes plenty of 'real'

"You can copy a level and pull it apart to understand how it's done."

engineering that'll have you slow clapping the screen in admiration as you begin to grasp what's really possible. And to help you grasp it, you can copy the levels over to My Moon and pull them apart switch by switch, and wire by wire, to understand how everything's done.

games cough nervously and look sheepishly at their feet. Think of Ratchet, Mario or Sonic but better. Yes, really. Played on your own or, as in the creation mode, with up to three friends, there's enough fun to be had straight out of the box to keep you entertained for hours



▲ A simple sensor/piston combo makes these platforms open and close.

■ No matter how beautiful or complex the single-player levels look, they're all built using the same tools you get to use.



2up
second opinion

Name Ben Wilson
Angle Sports and action fan

"Just have a little patience..." I despise Take That, but all the time I was playing LBP that song was going around in my head. Each time you collect a new item it gives you the chance to make something new, so you really need to explore every last inch of the levels to get the most out of it. As for building my own stuff - I'm way too lazy. I'll just wait for you kids and Crazy Obsessive Leon to do it for me. Cheers!"

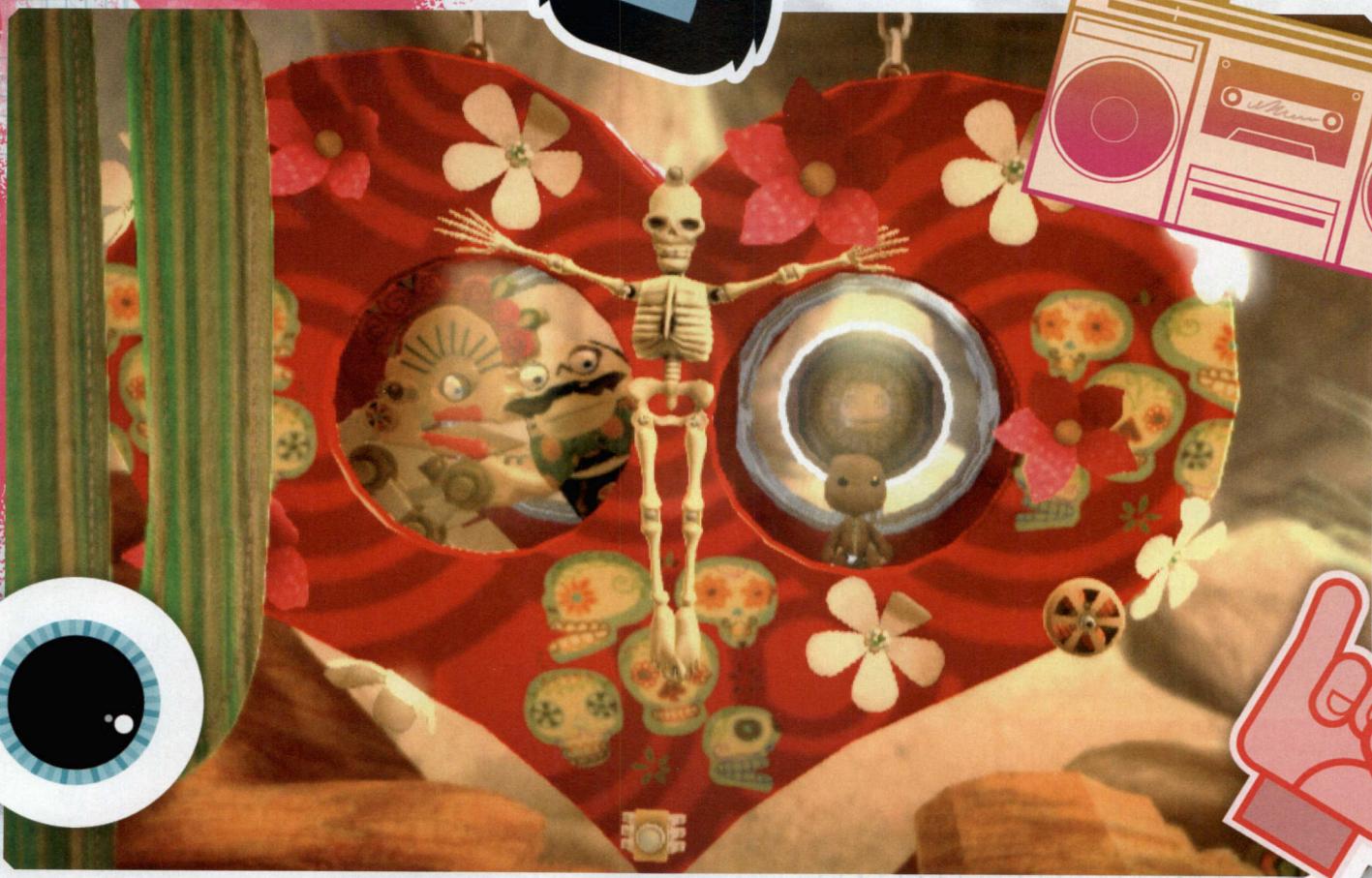
Best for...
Frustrated creatives



without building a thing. But you will end up creating. It's inescapable. Playing is fun but also inspirational – every whirring platform or spinning hazard is the seed of an idea to be taken away and cultivated in your own creations.

And it's what you make that will define LittleBigPlanet because your creations can be published and shared online. You can search for new levels via tags, try out the busiest ones or go for the most popular by user votes. You can collaborate with friends to build levels together, either face to face or online, and you can even send your creations to each other via PSN message.





This means one of two things. Firstly there'll be a never-ending stream of new content, constantly expanding, evolving and growing. User feedback will ensure the best creations rise to the top while the dross sinks without trace. And, secondly, we're going to see *incredible* stuff.

Creations that beggar belief and make brief, flickering internet celebrities of their creators. Think of what some gaming fans can make out of Lego, modelling clay, tin foil and toothpicks. Now think about what they could do with a tool this versatile and powerful. And yes, there will definitely be some scandalous filth – it's unavoidable – but LBP's community system lets you rate, review and, crucially, report levels. So anyone planning their 'wobbling forest of knobs' opus should probably have a rethink.

Learning curve

What's important is that LBP is fun at every level. Whether you're recreating Resident Evil 4 in felt (already blocked out the village, just having trouble getting the pitchforks right) or simply dropping in pre-made objects and using the Popit menu to slap stickers all over the shop – it's hugely

▲ The single-player game has objective-based levels – like helping this feuding couple get married.



▲ Here's how to make your own rocket sled: wheels, switch, jet engine, prayers.



▲ You have to think about signposting your levels so people know what to do. Hence the arrow.

Get your own sackboy toy!
Turn to page 90
to subscribe



enjoyable. Particularly when there are four of you messing around. The little sackboys or girls you control are absolute stars. Using the D-pad to pull faces or the analogue sticks to waggle arms isn't just a laugh; it makes them an extension of you. Especially with the incredible amount of customisation – Helghast helmet, pirate beard, dungarees and a dragon tail is the look I'm currently rocking. There's a child-like joy to simply messing about; merrily slapping each other around, playing through levels or exploring the special multiplayer areas. Even during creation, the reward and enjoyment scales to match your ability, time and effort. You could throw down a few

shapes and motors to build crude functional devices or really lose yourself designing huge games with multiple levels, plots and characters.

There simply isn't anything else like LBP on any system, anywhere. It's a beautifully elegant and powerful creative tool that puts unlimited potential in the palm of your hand. It empowers you in a way that was previously confined to the PC modding scene and actual game developers. Okay, whatever you make will always be an 'LBP' game, but it's incredibly liberating to create and make things without limits. It's in a league of its own and an experience that anyone with a PS3 would have to have sack for brains to miss out on. **Leon Hurley**

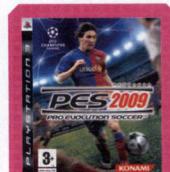




Beautiful game

PES 2009

Konami's dream team is back on song



Info

Format PS3 **ETA** 17 October **Pub** Konami **Dev** Konami **Players** 1-7 **Web** konami.co.uk **It's like** The Argentinian national side: ugly at times, and harshly judged by its own legions of fans, but scintillating at its best.

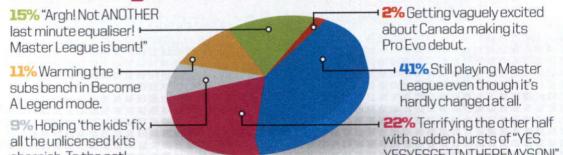
Over the last year it's become fashionable to knock the once untouchable Pro Evo. In forums across the globe fans bemoaned PES 2008's lack of licences, its slowdown, its bananas defensive AI, its 'cheese' tactics, and the 'slideyness' of its players. And while, to varying extents, they're all legitimate complaints, what the boo boys often fail to mention is that they still play it all the time, because despite its flaws it remains a brilliant football game.

Now it's even better, having fixed the flaws that caused such a stir a year ago. New PES is improved across the board after a summer of tinkering to make Roy Keane proud. Slowdown has been eliminated, making every match super-smooth. The success rate of cheese

tactics – like drawing the keeper and cutting the ball square to an unmarked forward who rolls it into an empty net – has been reduced. Players feel robust and no longer slide around the field as if towed by an invisible rope. And while it still can't compete with FIFA 09 when it comes to official teams and kits, PES has snagged the Champions League licence, and included its deepest ever edit mode.

As a result this feels like the near-perfect next-gen PES we've been waiting for. Shooting, already well implemented last time out, has been tweaked to make everything more delicate: half-filling the power bar more often than not sees the ball zip over, while more shots from crazy angles go wide. At first this is frustrating, but if you then go back to last year's game you immediately realise it's much improved. Wide free kicks from 30-40 yards out have also been fixed, so you can actually whip crosses in and have your players attack them instead of watching the ball harmlessly sail into the hands of the keeper. There's no denying that this is last year's PES with a ton of refinements and

What you do in... PES 2009



Timeline PES

1992



Konami Hyper Soccer
NES
The forebear to International Superstar Soccer, from which PES later evolved. At a time when Sensible Soccer ruled all, Hyper was never taken seriously.

1999



ISS Pro Evolution
PS1
A footballing revolution began when Konami took its magnificent Japanese game Winning Eleven 4 and simply repackaged it with UK text and talk.

2001



Pro Evolution Soccer
PS2
Dropping the ISS name but sticking to its Winning Eleven heritage, PES's PS2 debut was stunning, with a level of realism that had never been seen before.

2003



Pro Evolution Soccer 3
PS2
The first PES to score 10/10 in our sister mag QPS2. Italian ref Pierluigi Collina appeared on the cover, but not in the game.

2007



Pro Evolution Soccer 2008
PS3
The PS3 debut. Other than fury-inducing slowdown we loved it. Others called it a letdown after years of PS2 near-perfection.



► The cardboard crowds are much-improved – helped by a depth of field effect.

improvements, but there's also no denying that's a very good thing indeed.

Almost famous

It's clear Konami has a worried eye on the competition. Nowhere is this more evident than the new Become A Legend mode, clearly (cough) 'inspired' by the Be A Pro mode EA introduced in FIFA 08. You create a player and embark on a career playing as him and him only, starting out as a precocious 17-year-old at the superbly named FC Babilayna. After a trial game you field offers from three teams and sign for whichever you like the sound of.

I started out at Wearside (Sunderland) – where it quickly became clear that you truly have to earn your Legend status. That means spending much of your first season toiling in the reserves, playing against the first team and trying to get noticed. You can skip these games but doing so means you only get the bare



► Shooting is more delicate, but it's still possible to score humdingers like this one from Stevie G.

minimum improvements to your stats, which increase with experience in the same way as players do in Master League. You can weight development across six areas: kicking, dribbling, balance, power, speed and stamina.

Initially, having to spend every week playing meaningless matches against the same players is tedious like watching Charlton. But stay with it and it means that after a couple of seasons – by which time I'd negotiated a bigger contract with Espanyol – you get a much greater sense



► Lighting effects are improved so that evening games really feel like they're under floodlights.

that you've earned your spot in the team than you would from just walking straight into the senior side. Your first goal is a magic feeling, your first international cap four seasons down the line truly special.

The mode isn't without its flaws, though. One is the perspective during matches: the game adopts a roaming, behind-the-player cam similar to that of FIFA's Be A Pro. Problem is in PES it has a tendency to lurch around as if the cameraman has had one too many pre-match liveners. You can combat





102 this by switching to a default PES view – we prefer Wide, obviously – but then you can only ever see a third of the pitch at any one time, which is hardly ideal.

This needs looking at next year, but a bigger challenge for Konami will be adding a sense that you're immersed in the real world. Become A Legend is fun, but you're always aware that you're in charge of a fictional player in a fictional league. In FIFA's Be A Pro you have the choice of being thousands of real players, in real leagues, and as a result there's no competition as to which is superior.

Just Champion

Perhaps a way forward would be to marry Become A Legend to PES's other

► Ronaldo's not so much of a 'cheat character' this year, thank the Lord.

new marquee feature: the UEFA Champions League. Effectively a self-contained game-within-a-game, it offers the opportunity to play either exhibition matches complete with Champions League entrances, music and branding (a godsend given that PES's default menus are horrendous, and its soundtrack even worse – although you can import playlists from your XMB), or a full Champions League campaign. But while it's meant the addition of six new teams – you've always wanted to play as Romanian champs CFR Cluj, right? – there are still a ton of clubs who qualified for this season's CL but still have fictional names and kits, like Arsenal (North London) and Chelsea (London FC).



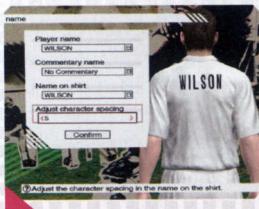
2up
second opinion

Name Nathan Ditum
Angle Reluctant FIFA convert

"Last year was the first year I dropped PES in favour of FIFA. EA's game wasn't great, but Konami's was even worse. Yes, this is an improvement, but offering up everything we should have had last year with a tacked on and copied Pro mode is still not good enough, especially when FIFA has made enough strides. It's a relief to see PES fixed, but right now FIFA is the more fluid and fun, and should be your game of choice."

Best for...
Fans who really like drawing badges

The first 3 hours in... Become A Legend



00:02 hours



00:33 hours



00:55 hours



02:01 hours



03:00 hours

Getting shirty

Spend 25 minutes trying to make self. Can't get fat chops right, so settle for baby face. Waste several minutes fiddling with spacing of name on shirt.

First game

Step out for the illustrious FC Babilanya. Score a stoppage time screamer. Upset colleagues on other mags with 'Ketsbaia' celebration.

Turning Pro

Sign for Sunderland (turning down Stoke and the Hammers). Wish mode had real money. Give self pep talk about knuckling down, working hard.

Bored stiffs

Get bored of knuckling down and working hard after ten games in reserves getting fouled by Anton Ferdinand. Want to leave.

Spanish adventure

Sign for Espanyol. During first-team debut, miss gilt-edged chance to win with ten mins left. Feel sudden, unexpected sympathy for Darren Bent.



Total football
Fast, smooth, thrilling and fulfilling – this is videogame footy as it's meant to be played. Pro Evo is right back on form this year.

The Big Cup
"Arshavin scores again! And little Zenit have won the Champions League!" Just magic, every single time.

Quick fix
Liverpool and Man Utd are the only licensed English teams... until the kids get started in the massive edit mode. Chop chop!

New Wembley
Old Trafford's gone, sadly, but instead we get to play at the home of the Frank Lampard Deflect-O-Special. Still yay, though.

LOVING

HATING

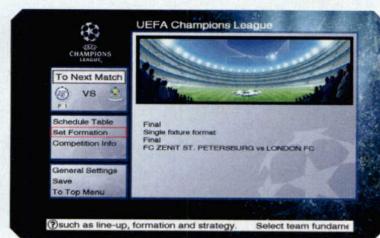
Argh, my eyes!
Menu screens designed by a blind student with a fascination for wallpaper patterns of the 1970s? Awful.



▲ Squads are updated to the season's start, so Robbie Keane's at the Scousers.



▲ In Become A Legend you get to alter your progress across six different attributes sets.



▲ The Champions League branding and music is a big inclusion, and a real step forwards for PES.

That's baffling, but the mode is still amazing. All games are night-time kick-offs under floodlights as in real life, and the flashy branding coupled with Jon Champion's commentary – serving up lines specific to the competition, like talking about the final already being sold out during the first leg of the semi – adds authenticity. Plus, while the format of the competition is locked in place, you can change the teams as you see fit. Once I'd won it with Zenit St Petersburg I set about doing so with my created Crystal Palace side, something that will never happen in reality. When you consider EA used to release a full-priced Champions League game that was basically a reskinned version of FIFA, this is a huge inclusion.

The licensing is still likely to draw criticism, particularly as La Liga has disappeared, with only seven licensed



▼ The licensed kits that are in PES – like some international sides – look lovely.

clubs from Spain remaining. But it's not the disaster that it sounds. The comprehensive edit mode from the PS2 days has returned, and now it's even deeper than before. As well as importing

year's only addition: an affection rating for each player which denotes how happy they are at their current club), and the still inconsistent, defensive AI. (Newcastle fans might be used to seeing both centre

backs run out of position to chase down a winger, but it's something PES must fix.)

The second question is tougher. For years PES was the realistic, sim-focused football game, while FIFA was the casual, quicker-paced rival. Now the tables have turned. FIFA 09 feels like the better representation of actual football, while PES is the more fun, accessible game. And the end result is a score draw. For the first time in over a decade – since the FIFA/Sensible Soccer Mega Drive era, in fact – the fans have two

outstanding and, crucially, very different, football titles to choose from. It'll be very interesting to see which plays best online, but for now whichever side you support, you can't lose. **Ben Wilson**

images from your PS3's hard drive you can use a Paint-like tool to build logos and sponsors from scratch, and even add chants as MP3 files. It means,

basically, that within weeks – perhaps even days – of the game's release you'll

almost certainly be able to go online, download an option file with perfect

everything, and port it to your PS3 with a

USB stick. Legal? No. Inevitable? Yes.

All of which leads to the two most important questions of all. Namely, what's stopping us giving PES 10/10? And – of course – is it better than FIFA 09? The first is an easy one to answer. There are just too many minor quibbles – like the fact that Master League has barely changed in half a decade (this





❑ Ultimate X is all about timing. And not falling on your head.



❑ We love Shark Boy so much that we make OPM's Nathan dress like this on a daily basis.



❑ Old codger Kevin Nash (Diesel in WWE) is still going – here's him taking on Samoa Joe.



❑ Running moves are the quickest and cheesiest way to victory in multiplayer. Boo!

Plucky newcomer

TNA Impact

Is it game over for WWE Smackdown?

Total Nonstop Action wrestling's videogame debut couldn't have come at a better time, with the rival WWE Smackdown Vs Raw series on the wane and the UK release for the excellent Fire Pro Wrestling Returns on PS2 pulled at the last minute. Happily this is much more than an opportunistic crack at a genre in dire need of freshening up. Its unique six-sided ring and roster of WWE vets (Kurt Angle, Booker T), indie starlets (Samoa Joe, AJ Styles) and aspiring youngsters (Shark Boy, Chris Sabin) are obvious plus points, but it's Impact's impressively accessible gameplay which makes this worth a look over its big name rival.



ScorePole
Fire Pro still pummels all rivals, but you'll need a US PS2 to play it. Grrr.

Not since Smackdown's PS1 days has there been a grapple game that's so easy to pick up and play. Consider these controls: **△** to run, **□** to punch, **⊗** to kick, **Ⓐ** to perform a hold or slam, **Ⓑ** to block, **Ⓐ** used in combo with **⊗**, **Ⓐ**, and **Ⓑ** to make moves more powerful. That's pretty much it. The fights are fast and the wrestlers responsive, and the lack of an on-screen ref (a shortcut we can *just about* let go) means wrapping a chair around your opponent's skull is legal at all times. If you've never played a grapple game before, it's a great place to start.

Worthy of special praise is the game's submission system. Press **Ⓑ** and a direction when your opponent is on the ground and you'll lock a hold onto the nearest limb. This triggers a sequential button-matching mini-game (press **Ⓑ**, **⊗**, **Ⓑ**

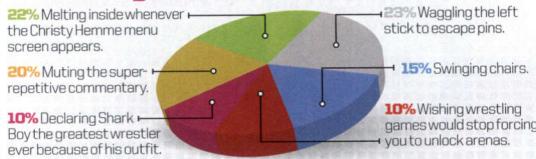


before your opponent hits, say, **Ⓐ**, **Ⓑ**, **Ⓐ**, **Ⓑ** to keep the hold locked on and inflict further damage). In practice, this simple idea is far more satisfying than Smackdown's yank-the-right-stick-and-hope mechanic.

Near fall

Only its lack of depth prevents Impact from troubling the top tier of wrestling games. Hardcore fans will gripe at the shortness of matches – you'll rarely go over three minutes and in that time it's hard to put on a mat classic. Plus the movesets aren't exactly vast, so once you've played, say, 20 matches as Christian Cage, you never want to use him again. (And Christian Cage is my favourite wrestler ever) The game's story mode, which sees you take on the identity of a

What you do in... Impact

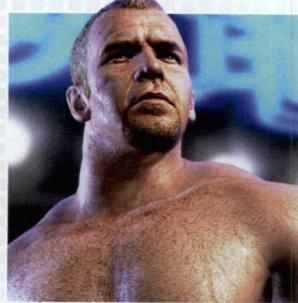


Q&A

Christian Cage talks to OPM

Q Is there a buzz about Impact backstage?

A Yeah, everybody's real excited about it. The videogame business is big and it can also bring in new fans, plus it's such a true to life game. Midway put a lot into it and wanted feedback from the guys on moves and the storyline mode to get it as true to life as possible.



Q What's it like seeing yourself in virtual form?

A I don't wanna use the word 'eerie' because that sounds negative, but it's strange. Impact has the highest level of detail of any wrestling game ever. It's surreal. As a kid I played wrestling games when they started and also collected wrestling action figures, and you never get used to seeing yourself immortalised in either of those forms.

Q Do you play games now?

A Yeah man. I'm a huge gamer. My wife gets mad at me. Right now I'm playing a lot of GTA IV. I played Call Of Duty 4 and I obviously like the NHL games from growing up in Canada. I also like the Fight Night games and I'm big into the Top Spin tennis series.

Q It's been three years since you left WWE for TNA. How has it been?

A It was something I needed to do for both my personal and my professional life. It's been a good transition, everyone greeted me with open arms and gave me a chance to step up and perform consistently at a different level. That's what I was looking for.

Q You grew up with Edge, who now headlines WWE. Would you say the same about his career?

A Definitely. I'm really proud of him. Smackdown is his show, he's the measuring stick. They opened that door for him a crack and he kicked it open and hasn't looked back. He's the man over there.

[fully customisable] former champ named Suicide and work your way back up the wrestling ladder, is a mixed bag. It's well acted and logically paced, but offers little replay value once you've gone through unlocking all the available environments (Mexico FTW!), characters, and movesets.

Even so, it's hard to stop yourself from dipping in for one more quick exhibition match, and that has to be considered a plus.



And the inclusion of five real matches – including the very first in TNA's history – as additional content has to be praised. In the past it felt like the brains behind Smackdown didn't take the threat of Impact seriously. The fact is, they'd do well to start now, because with the addition of a few more wrestler-specific storylines and a create-a-PPV mode, a second instalment of Impact could very easily become the only wrestling game that matters. **Ben Wilson**

BluMovies

HD films to feed your next-gen disc player

This Is England

Director Shane Meadows **Starring** Thomas Turgoose, Stephen Graham **ETA** Out now

Extraordinary growing up in the '80s drama. Though it explores some dark areas, probing the underside of England's Falklands-era nationalism, what's really surprising are the tender and joyous bits, which bring a rare freshness to a ton of movie clichés – first kiss, first gang, and that first sad glimpse of adulthood.



Transformers

Director Michael Bay **Starring** Shia LaBeouf, Megan Fox **ETA** Out now

Thumping CGI remake of the fondly remembered toy-shilling robot cartoon. For once it's not the special effects that spoil things – the mechs are incredibly detailed and imposing – but the story that uses them. Or rather fails to, until one ace bit of highway ass-kicking and a disorienting inner-city showdown.



One Missed Call

Director Eric Valette **Starring** Shannyn Sossamon, Ed Burns **ETA** Out now

Yes this is a remake of a Japanese horror movie. Yes, it is quite a lot like The Ring, except on two key points. Number one: it's stars pretty pixie lady Shannyn Sossamon, which is a big plus point but utterly outweighed by the fact that – number two – it's scandalously unscary. Not awful but also not, you know, good.

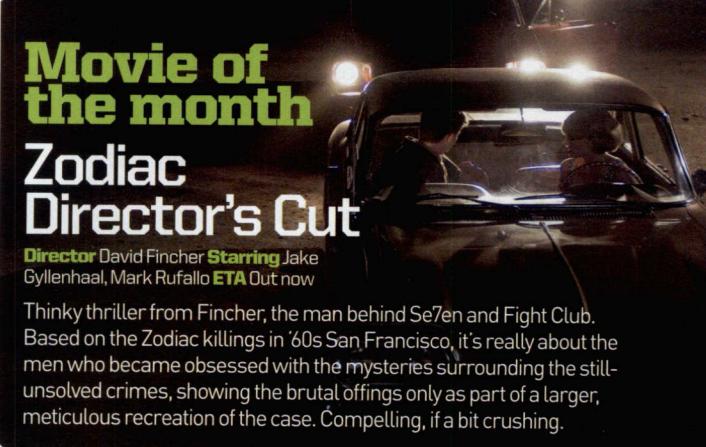


Movie of the month

Zodiac Director's Cut

Director David Fincher **Starring** Jake Gyllenhaal, Mark Ruffalo **ETA** Out now

Thinky thriller from Fincher, the man behind Se7en and Fight Club. Based on the Zodiac killings in '60s San Francisco, it's really about the men who became obsessed with the mysteries surrounding the still-unsolved crimes, showing the brutal offerings only as part of a larger, meticulous recreation of the case. Compelling, if a bit crushing.





Fracture's tectonic weaponry enables you to distort the ground your enemies stand on for tactical advantage.

Great depression

Fracture

Only groundbreaking in the literal sense

Some day the videogame war between Men's Health cover models in stupidly high-visibility sci-fi armour and their implacable but forgettable mutant enemies will be over. However, with LucasArts' first battalion of generic Space Marines opening up yet another new front in the struggle against stylistic innovation, I wouldn't go holding your breath. From the evidence of this high concept (you can mould and shape terrain on-the-fly to create cover and wrong-foot enemies) but perversely anonymous third-person shooter, PS3's arms dealer clearly still has a warehouse full of decommissioned Laser Quest vests and can't dole them out fast enough.

Murder, death... hill?

It's a crying shame, really. As game premises go, Fracture's is a cut above. It's North America in the year 2161, and with an ideological schism opened up between the East and West coasts over the genetic versus cybernetic evolution of mankind, the divide is made physical when the polar ice caps finally melt away.

Like this?

Play these



Haze
Similarly high concept shooter from the makers of Timesplitters that also manages to suffocate on its own clichés despite some fun fragging along the way.

VERDICT 6



Turok
A Brontosaurus-dumb but nevertheless likable journeyman shooter pitting space marine types against mercs and herds of razor-mawed dinosaurs.

VERDICT 6

effectively cutting the US in half and forcing a lot of Midwestern hicks and their bloodhounds to tread water forever more. The East coast (or Pacifica as it renames itself) favours genetic enhancement as a way forward for mankind. Meanwhile The Western Alliance (oddly on the East coast. WTF?) embraces nanotechnology (including new terrain-morphing weaponry conceived to stop the encroaching oceans) and rules that anyone with more than ten percent altered DNA is no longer human. And so the stage is set for a titanic struggle between branching strains of mankind that raises questions about what it really is to be human.

So why is it that five minutes after being deployed as [sigh] Jet Brody – Western Alliance engineer – deep in hostile Pacifican territory I'm running around with all the tactical purpose of an eight-year old at playtime, shooting listlessly at waves of faceless enemy combatants? And all the while, trying not to suffocate on a rising swell of shooter déja vu that threatens to render the game's one cool idea irrelevant?

Info

Format PS3 **ETA** 10 Oct **Pub** LucasArts **Dev** Day1 Studios **Players** 1-12 **Web** lucasarts.com/games/fracture **It's like** Quasar on a giant undulating waterbed against strangers from craigslist.

To be fair, playing with Brody's ground-morphing Entrencher gun is quite entertaining for a while, and never less than impressive to behold. Target a patch of earth (the Entrencher is powerless against tiles and concrete. What gives, boffins?) and with a squeeze of **L1** the ground will shudder and cave in, making a crater. Press **R1** instead and a hatchback-sized hillock will suddenly rise out of the ground like a tectonic trouser tent. But there are limitations: while repeated fire does have a cumulative effect, it's impossible to dig too far down or pile too high as excavations have a tendency to spread. Completing Ordnance Survey's worst nightmare is a quartet of contour-rippling grenades. The first two of these replicate the Entrencher's functions with more violent results; the Vortex grenades, meanwhile, suck objects and enemies into an impressively deadly twister, and the Spike grenades send never less than comical, gigantic basalt phalluses shooting out of the ground. Ideal for reaching inaccessible areas or getting cabaret work on the gay scene. And competing to





▲ The Vortex Grenade is even more fun than this looks.



give Brody curvature of the spine, Fracture also gives you the usual spread of sci-fi shotguns, rifles and rocket launchers.

Crust issues

It could have been the best hardware spread in games, but where Fracture's ground-bending kit goes wrong is in the chasm between the freedom it promises, and the limitations it finds it has to impose to prevent curious players [ie, *all* of them] from breaking the game. So, when faced with dead-ends you're *sometimes* arbitrarily prevented from digging under the foundations to escape, and forced to find a doorway. Or when creating a mound of cover for a comrade it only works if you place it where the game wants you to. Ironically, elsewhere, Fracture abandons you to solve frustrating physics-based puzzles without the slightest bit of signposting. As such it's

possible to complete mission objectives and not know whether you've done the right thing or just brute-forced yourself through a loophole in the game's design. And then there's the fact that, with everyone on the battlefield firing their spectacular tectonic weapons, large battles can end up chaotic like paintballing on a bouncy castle as it tumbles off a cliff.

In the end, Fracture takes its own title a little too literally, serving up a jarring experience that tries [and fails] to marry a wildly ambitious gameplay dynamic with some of the most disappointingly generic art design we've ever seen. That the tectonic weapons never fully make that transition from first-flush enjoyable gimmick to essential tool of war means that, while enjoyable for a while, Fracture ends up digging a deep hole for itself that it never manages to escape from. **Paul Fitzpatrick**

PlayStation.
Official Magazine - UK

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PlayList

Essential tunes to download this month

The Streets

Everything Is Borrowed

Format: Album ETA Out now Price £7.99

Mike Skinner returns chippier than he was back in 2006, mixing up bumping garage beats with gospel soul, Eastern mysticism, and references to him upstairs. Not that he's totally sweetened up: "I wanna go to heaven for the weather/But hell for the company." myspace.com/thestreets

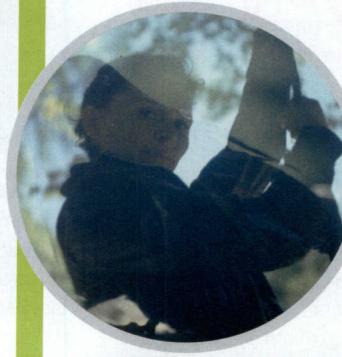


Mogwai

The Hawk Is Howling

Format: Album ETA Out now Price £7.99

Death, from above, courtesy of Scotland's guitar manglers. The broiling Batcat sees them summon stormclouds, but elsewhere there's more melancholy star-gazing stuff and typically amusing song titles. See: I Love You, I'm Going To Blow Up Your School. myspace.com/mogwai



Emiliana Torrini

Me And Armini

Format: Track ETA Out now Price £0.79

The delectable Icelandic vocalist is a lady who has both written songs for Kylie and sung a song about Gollum for The Lord Of The Rings soundtrack. Here, she brings her velvety pipes to a sweet ska bounce that's deceptively cheery, given it's about being stalked by an obsessive superfan.

myspace.com/emilianatorrini

Download of the month

Dragonforce

Ultra Beatdown

Format: Album ETA Out now Price £7.99

You know them as the epitome of axe-shredding from trying to complete their Through The Fire And Flames on Guitar Hero III. Now enjoy their Meat Loaf-on-rocket-fuel metal without snapping your fingers. myspace.com/dragonforce





Organised time

Yakuza 2

Damn it feels good to be a gangster



Info

Format PS2 ETA Out now Pub Sega Dev Sega Players 1 Web segacom/gamesite/yakuza2 It's like if Tony Soprano were younger, Japanese, and a lot harder.

A part from the amount of time they spend wandering around talking to strangers – which is loads – Sega's Yakuza behave as you'd like to imagine the real ones do: enjoying luxury cuisine, sipping sake with exotic girls, and cracking skulls with spectacular crowbar finishing moves. You imagine they'd cut Ross Kemp's finger off before he could get a faux-concerned word in.

Yakuza 2 might have been a long time coming – it's been out in Japan for two years – but it's another great PS2 swansong. And it's easy to see why Sega took its time bringing the game to

Europe. On the one hand it's a very good beat-'em-up packed with cool gangsters – the sort of stuff which translates easily – but on the other it's basically an upper-class Japanese lifestyle simulator, which is understandably a much harder sell.

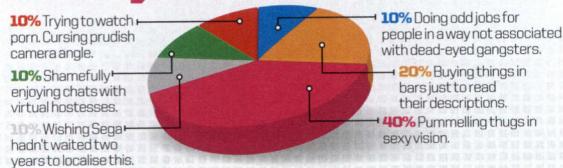
You play, Kiryu Kazuma, who spends his life alternately brutalising thugs and dossing around swanky Japanese towns. This is set against a relentlessly paced mob story that sees our man – the former head of the Tojo clan, now retired – called upon as a crisis hits his old gang. "Just when I think I'm out..."

Maim and watch

The plot is tangled and the telling takes its time – there are literally hours of cut-scenes here. (Need a recap on Yakuza's storyline? The opening, 45-minute cinematic will see you right.) Still, at least the translation is subtitled, rather than the godawful sub-American soap dubbing Sega used in the first Yakuza.

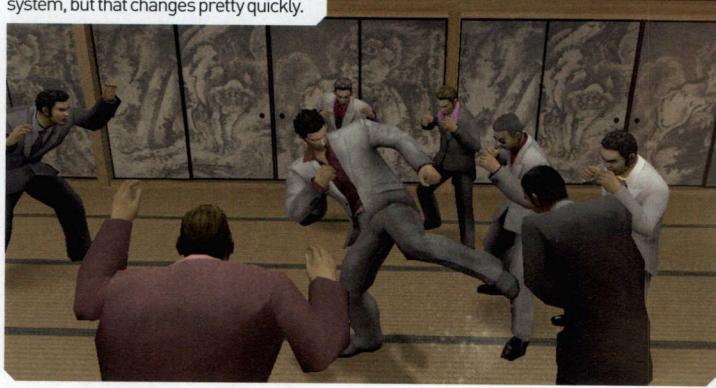
And the really good news is the upshot of all the HBO-style intrigue is fighting. Loads and loads of fighting. Your Yakuza can use a huge number of weapons and has some of the most brutal finishers you'll see outside of Manhunt. The basics seem limited initially, but that's because the early enemies struggle to give the system a proper work-out. By halfway through the first disc (of two) your foes become smarter and tougher, and real strategy comes into play. Kiryu can be levelled up almost constantly, which rather than simply boosting stats opens up new moves and styles: by the time you're drop-kicking thugs to the floor and following up with a crack to the face, the combat has completely transformed from cumbersome to Chuck Norris. The camera can be annoying, some of the bosses cheat (like bosses always do), and locking-on is done in an odd, halfway manner (you stay facing a general direction, rather than focusing on one

What you do in... Yakuza 2





▀ Kiryu's early opponents aren't good enough to tax the game's superb combat system, but that changes pretty quickly.



"Alternate between brutalising thugs and dossing around swanky Japanese towns."

opponent), but overall it works. And it enables you to smash people's faces into walls, then knee their bodies into the wall as they crumple, all shown from a sexy camera angle.

Walk the walk

When you're not fighting, you're wandering. The town sections are a rather strange mix of semi-fixed cameras and free roaming that feels slightly archaic, particularly with the frequent pauses for loading. But technical limitations aside, Yakuza 2 has moments to steal the breath – like your first visit to Omi headquarters, marching between a phalanx of officers who bow solemnly as you pass. It may not have the sheer detail made possible on PS3, but Yakuza 2 has a flair for world-building that makes its environments look compelling. The town exploration sections are a

little too fond of their fetch-quests, and you probably need a basic curiosity about Japanese culture to appreciate the time you'll spend in massage parlours, video-halls and restaurants – but the amount of content crammed into the few streets of each town is huge. That goes for the game in general: your save file will be showing ten hours or more before the first disc is finished.

Yakuza is really where Sega took much-mourned Dreamcast classic Shenmue. The fighting system is similar and Kiryu even looks like Shenmue's hero Ryo. But (whisper it) the addition of a genuinely absorbing story actually makes Yakuza 2 the better game – and a great reason to dig your PS2 out again. Oh, and if you should happen to meet anyone from Sega, point out that it wouldn't hurt to localise number three a bit quicker. **Rich Stanton**

PlayStation.
Official Magazine - UK

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Japan Watch

This month's overseas action in a nutshell

X Edge

Format PS3 Pub Idea Factory Subtitles No

It looks like just another RPG, awash with teenage vamps and MIT-baffling combat systems, but X Edge actually teams up six of the biggest Japanese role-player devs to create a monster mash-up of characters from the likes of Disgaea and Atelier Marie. Truly the Crosby, Stills and Nash of RPGs, with all the excitement that implies.



Katekyo Hitman Reborn!?

Format PS2 Pub Marvelous Entertainment Subtitles No

When average kid Tsuna learns that he's next in line to become the boss of ruthless Mafia clan, the Vongola Famiglia, their top hitman, a psychotic *infant* called Reborn, is dispatched to tutor him in murder and carb-heavy cuisine. Of course he is.

Daisenryaku

Format PSP Pub SystemSoft Alpha Subtitles No

You may have noticed a certain amount of sarcasm directed at games in this column, but not with this tidy-looking strategy title. It's a bracingly comprehensive war sim featuring billions of dollars-worth of real-world hardware. The results are like a particularly humourless Advance Wars with depleted uranium and Gulf War Syndrome. We like.

Exotic Boxart Of The Month



Majin Tantei Nougami Neuro
Cleverly anticipating minimum-wage game-shop drones' lack of pride in their work, this game box works even if you stack it upside down. Clever thinking.



Yotsunoha: A Journey Of Sincerity
It's sincerity as in, 'It is with utmost sincerity that I apologise for bringing this filth into our home. Please don't leave me. I'll speak to the reporters now.'



Kinnikuman Muscleman Grand Prix
The art here is ace. Learning that the superhero lead has to fill a garlic meter 'on his forehead to get his powers seals the deal.





Carefully ordering about your clichéd commandos is the way to win the war.



Luckily the Nazis are terrible at judging how thick their cover is, so firefights tend to be short.



Tearful tank-buster

Brothers In Arms Hell's Highway

Shooting and thinking? It'll never catch on...

Does anyone really need Brothers In Arms, the latest addition to PS3's teetering mountain of WW2-themed shooters? If Call Of Duty is the cigar-chomping sergeant, Medal Of Honor is the reliable machine-gunner who's done it all before, and Turning Point is the country bumpkin who gets killed in the first act. Which leaves Hell's Highway as... Who? I'm going to say the officious staff sergeant who everyone hates at first but grudgingly respects by the end. And here's why.

It doesn't have patience for people who run straight at Jerry with an M50 blazing. Try the full frontal assault and you'll take three steps max before you're dead like corduroy. Although it uses the same rest-to-recover system as COD, there's much more urgency about BIA's – after one bullet the screen turns fire engine red, and if you don't dive into cover the next bullet will probably finish you off. If a Nazi catches you unawares, you're dead. Try to shoot anyone from more than 20 yards and you might as well be using a Nerf gun. And even with iron

Castlist

Staff sergeant



Matt Baker
The broody sergeant. Kind eyes. Communicates entirely in sulky voiceovers.

Sergeant



'Red' Hartsock
Real name 'Joe'. He leads the machine gun fire team that supports Baker.

Corporal



Sam Corrion
Has issues about his rank, but does the job when a fence needs ruining.

sights, your aim's pretty wobbly using anything automatic.

The key is teamwork, of course. In BIA every goose-stepper Nazi comes with a tiny circle over his head. Tell your team to shoot at him and the circle will gradually turn white, showing that he's afraid to leave cover. You're then free to sprint around behind him and shoot his arms off. Yes, BIA lets you do that.

And that's pretty much the game. The levels are beautifully designed, featuring vast expanses of cover offering various levels of protection, so the real challenge is doing a bit of recon and working out which route leaves you least vulnerable.

Lead head

Clear out the Nazis and the end of each level usually has you holding the position you've just taken in a big whizz-bang shootout. Which is never that hard, since the brave boys of the Panzer Corps aren't very bright – during one house-to-house clearance, a pair of Nazis were exchanging



Info

Format: PS3 ETA Out now Pub Ubisoft Dev: Gearbox Software Players 1-8 Website brothers.inarmsgame.us.ubi.com It's like Band Of Brothers, only even more heartbreaking.

fire with me from almost point blank range when they ducked behind cover, lost interest and started laying down suppressing fire on the rest of my unit... hiding behind a tree 60 yards away. They didn't notice the grenade, either.

You can't fault BIA for making the Nazis into dumb parodies of themselves – war movies have been doing that for years. And although you'll hate its parade of stereotypical-seeming yanks – which one's the ginger one again? – they'll soon grow on you, at least until the plot

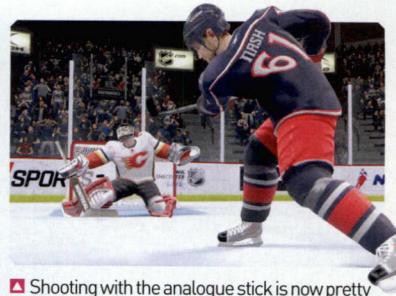
twists cruelly pick them off. It hasn't quite got the gung-ho brilliance of COD or the set-piece pop of MOH, but a few hours in you'll be happy to have Brothers on your side.

Joel Snape





Controlling the goalies is pretty much like ushering the puck into the net.



Shooting with the analogue stick is now pretty much identical to the system in EA's NHL 09.



Pre-match presentation is beautiful, with video images beamed onto the glittering rink surface.



Shorts over trousers is dead as a look right now, but hockey players pay no mind to fashion.

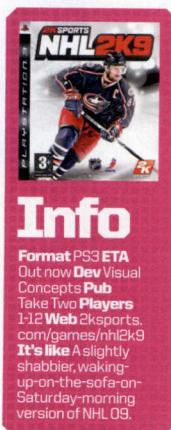
Happy slapping

NHL 2K9

2K's skater just edged out by EA rival

For a nation much more at home kicking balls about on grass than sliding a rubber biscuit over frozen water, the appearance of a second ice hockey game on PS3 in as many months which looks, plays and even sounds almost the same as the first – EA's NHL 09 – is pushing it. Confusing the issue even further is the fact that they're both really good. Last month's NHL 09 scored an impressive nine, and 2K9, although still lagging a little behind, is a big improvement over last year's stiff, over-serious sim.

The biggest change for 2K9 is in the controls. Following on from NHL 07's trailblazing lead, both EA and Take Two's hockey series have dabbled with using the right analogue stick to control the in-game hockey stick in recent years. However, 2K9's system was a muddle, attempting to capture EA's movement-matching swing without ripping off the



idea wholesale. The resulting setup was counterintuitive and clumsy, and while the option remains for the stubborn few who mastered it last year, the default controls are now a hybrid of face buttons and stick. This genuinely offers the best of both worlds – pressing \textcircled{X} to change player and especially \textcircled{O} to put in a thumping check feels satisfying and natural in a way that shouldn't be tampered with. And the stick controls are simpler too: left and right to shift the puck around your body, forward for a quick wrist shot and back then forward for a slap shot – while on the defence your player pokes his stick in whichever direction you press.

Icy reception

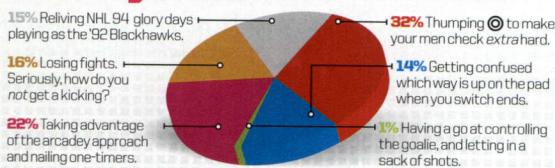
As a result the game feels much looser this year, and more fun. There's still enormous depth here if you go looking for it – mastering skill controls, scrapping for face-offs, the huge, Master League-style Franchise mode – but overall the dull realism's been dialled back to make for a faster, more physical and highly accessible game. Again in line with EA's 09 sports games, 2K9 includes customisable difficulty settings that enable you to fiddle

with human and computer skill settings independently, not only making the game easier or harder but shaping it to your particular strengths and weaknesses. Full of holes in defence? Bump the human goalie skill up to maximum, or increase your pass intercepting stats. Always second to reach rebounds? Increase your burst speed, or decrease the computer's. Basically, if there's something that's bugging you about how the game plays, there's a very good chance you'll be able to fix it, and if you just want to make it easier or harder, you can do that too.

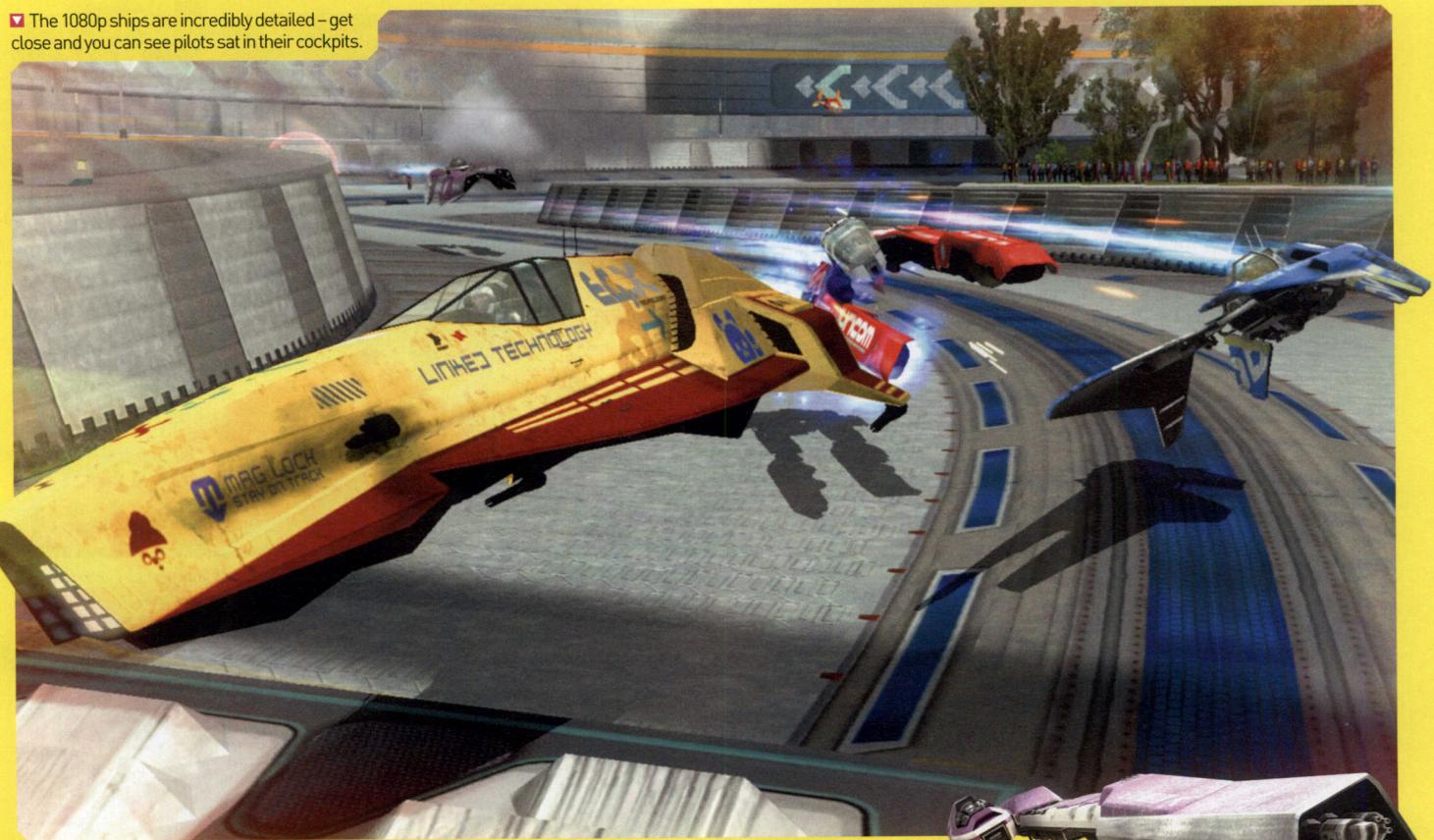
So why does 2K9 still lag behind NHL 09? Because everywhere that 2K9 is good, NHL 09 is excellent. Its glittering ice reflections are ever so slightly prettier, its use of official licences more innovative (thanks mostly to how ace and involving the Be A Pro career mode is this year) and its gameplay more comprehensive and accomplished. What it comes down to is if you're after a slightly simpler but still fun ice hockey game, look no further than this, but if you want the deepest and best there is then EA's big-scoring NHL 09 is your only man.

Nathan Ditum

What you do in... NHL 2K9



▼ The 1080p ships are incredibly detailed – get close and you can see pilots sat in their cockpits.



Speed racer

Wipeout HD

Sony goes back to the future



The answer to everyone's first question is yes – it's still fast. Oh God, it's fast. Much faster, during the advanced bits, than I can possibly control, which, perversely, is the threshold normally held up as a minimum requirement for Wipeout ('Will it break me? Yes. Good'). And it's beautiful, too. The latest version of Sony's always stylish future-racing series is a specially selected combination of the best bits from the two PSP games – Pure and Pulse – given an intense high-definition re-engineering. It runs in flawless 1080p at 60 frames per second, intended to

showcase the visual powers of PS3 and to make the point that Wipeout is still the last word in futurist gaming art design.

Shake, barrel and roll

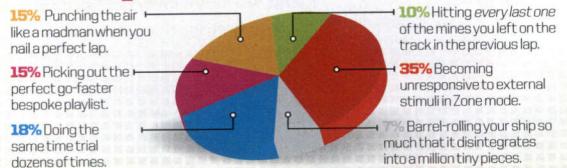
In terms of actual play, things have changed very little since the early days. Hover ships race around swooping, curving circuits, picking up surges of speed or weapons to use against opponents from pads on the track surface. The key to it all is purity. The racing is frictionless (bar the use of corner-aid air brakes), and the secret to winning is in avoiding contact with everything – track barriers, other ships, enemy rockets – because each scrape and jolt sucks away velocity. After a while it gets obsessive – you find yourself ruthlessly focused on preserving momentum – and feeling soaring satisfaction from every clean lap.

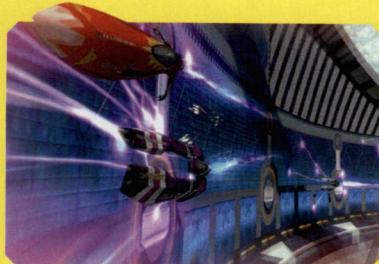
That's the basics, anyway – going really fast around giant techno

rollercoaster courses trying not to smash into anything. But a couple of minor additions have been made. Players can now perform barrel rolls when in the air (well, you're always in the air, but specifically when you make a jump) by pressing $\leftarrow, \leftarrow, \leftarrow$ or $\rightarrow, \rightarrow, \rightarrow$ in quick succession. Cautiously welcomed by purists, the fear has been that the barrel roll will upset the balance of Wipeout's racing because each time you pull one off you get an extra boost of speed. In effect, though, it fits nicely within the game's existing tactical setup, as it also takes a chunk out of your health. This means that when you're racing on your own – during time trials and speed laps – it's a handy option to have, but anyone over-using it in a full race will be easy to pick off, and may well destroy themselves (I speak from bitter experience).

Also new is the pilot aid for novice racers. Known as 'the bumpers' in the OPM office (because it does the same job

What you do in... Wipeout HD





► Purple mag strips keep ships on-track even when they're racing sideways or upside down.



► The iconic Feisar. Loyalty points are awarded for sticking with the same team through events.



► Scrapping keeps you tied up in the pack, but getting out ahead is crucial to finishing first.

as the baby bumpers they have in bowling alleys) the pilot aid helps newcomers ease themselves into the game without the frustration of spending their first few races spanging from one wall to the other in a shower of sparks and expletives. It's basically cheating – big red arrows appear on screen and guide you with invisible hands away from the barriers – but it's a great leveller, and can be essential if you want to try the new split-screen mode against friends with differing skill levels.

Less successful are the new motion-sensor controls. Sixaxis sounds ideally suited to controlling a hovercraft – they're all floaty, right? – and the implementation is thoughtfully done, with options for controlling just your ship's pitch (tilting the pad back and forth) or full-on steering (rolling left and right), as well as fully customisable sensitivity settings. These help – the default of 60% seems

Influences Behind the rebirth of a PlayStation icon



► In Wipeout's corporate future, neon billboards flash alongside the tracks.

DevTalk



"HD is a different experience for people who've forgotten what Wipeout is like."

Colin Berry
Lead designer
Sony Liverpool

far too twitchy – but still the problem is that you're never likely to use motion controls in favour of tried and tested thumb and pad, especially given the minute lateral corrections needed to stay on course when Wipeout gets up to full

way to Meltdown) made of different types of race – time trials, speed laps, tournaments, straight races and trippy survival mode Zone.

The point is, there's loads and loads here. To earn gold in each race in each

"This is a perfect update, with glittering HD and savage speeds."

velocity. In the end, Sixaxis control just doesn't seem nuanced enough.

Track listing

As for what's actually included, there are eight tracks (Chenghou Project, Sol 2, Vineta K, Sebenco Climb, Anulpha Pass and Ubermall from Pure, Moa Therma and Metropia from Pulse) all of which are also available in reverse configuration. The main mode is Campaign, where these tracks are played out in various combinations over a series of increasingly difficult events (starting with Uplift and going all the

event will easily take upwards of ten hours, and that's before you start fiddling with custom soundtracks, making one-off events in the Racebox mode or taking your ship on PSN (races support up to eight players – full online review soon). And despite containing almost as much as a full-price game, it costs just £11.99, making it pretty much essential. Wipeout

HD retains all that was great about the series – which did so much to define PlayStation's early identity – and succeeds in updating it perfectly for the PS3, with glittering HD and savage speeds. **Nathan Ditum**

Baby racers	Sunday stroll	Amateur hour	Fast and furious	Speedway	What now?	No chance
Hard-o-meter						

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✓ Vader gets a playable opening level and his ass kicked by you later in the game.



PS 114 Dark side

Star Wars The Force Unleashed

Finally, a Jedi game that actually comes out fighting



Info

Format PS3 ETA Out now
Pub Activision
Dev LucasArts
Players 1-2 Web
lucasarts.com/games/theforceunleashed It's like getting the chance to go mad with a lightsaber, only without having to do the noise yourself.

In its very best moments this is everything you could want from a Star Wars game. Weaving elegantly between enemies, lightsaber flashing through dizzying arcs – a slash across a Stormtrooper's chest, an impaling thrust into a Rodian – the sense of power is brilliant. You can enter a room and know instantly how you're going to kill everyone in it. No wonder the Dark Side is so seductive. Once you've toasted Jawas with lightning, or used the Force to smash opponents into walls, it's hard not to get a taste for it. Got a toy lightsaber at home? A green one? You'll soon be trading it in for red.

Playing as Vader's secret apprentice, Starkiller, hunting down Jedi, works well as a plot. The whistle-stop tour of cameos also doesn't jar as much as you might think. The only thing that's hard

to stomach is that it doesn't so much rewrite the story as tear out pages and eat them. Especially as events clearly make Starkiller a) the most powerful Jedi ever and b) the crucial pivot responsible for everything in episodes IV, V and VI.

Power of the Force

Your core powers are built around lightsaber combos, lightning and Force manipulation. It's initially simplistic hack 'n slash stuff, but level up and things get interesting. New combos and powers increase your options and you can mix them up – finishing a fury of blows with a flare of electricity or a devastating Force blast. The combat actually feels similar to Devil May Cry 4, mixing attacks on with combinations of lightning and Force buttons to unleash a savage range of moves that decimate the opposition.





2up

second opinion

Name Rachel Weber
Angle Lapsed Jedi Knight

"I loved Star Wars so much as a kid that I dreamt about being adopted by the Skywalkers. My passion withered with the new films, but I was still dying to get my hands on the Force. I always thought it was special though, not something any alien could master. Every Tom, Dick and Felucian has developed their own Jedi tricks here, and some of them barely flinched when I tried using mine. Yoda would be ashamed."

Best for...

Nostalgia-fuelled addicts

It stops short of Nero's acrobatic brilliance, though. Around halfway in (roughly six hours) you'll have unlocked all the best attacks. So just when you feel the fighting is about to reveal hidden depths, it stalls. You can still power up abilities but the variety stops. One redeeming touch is the ability to undo all your levelling up at any point and reassign all your collected XP from scratch. You can constantly rebuild your character, boosting health, 'saber skills, Force powers, depending on the situation.

What's hard to understand, though, is that having given you abilities, LucasArts seems hell bent on stopping you from using them. Get past basic 'troopers and rebel militia and practically every enemy has a way of avoiding your Force powers, or a version of their own. So there are Stormtroopers that can't be picked up with the Force, Felucians who parry lightsaber attacks with a sword made out of a jawbone or Rodians with gloves that give them artificial Force powers. It leaves you feeling impotent, or worse, like your abilities aren't so special after all.

That's infuriating because when you're allowed to cut loose with your skills it's brilliant. You can raise a kicking



Level up your abilities and even AT-ATs won't stand up to your powers.

Like this?

Play these



Psi-Ops

Midway's underrated shooter has some brilliant Force-like psychic abilities.

VERDICT 8



Soulcalibur IV

Vader and his apprentice both make an appearance in this excellent sword-based beat-'em-up.

VERDICT 9



Paratus lives on Raxus Prime where he's made his own Jedi Council out of rubbish.



Enemies try to grab objects – and each other – in their attempts to avoid being lifted into the air.

Stormtrooper into the air and waft him around with a wave of the hand. Or annihilate another with a beautiful twirling lightsaber move that would make Darth Maul jealous. Small enemy groups are endless fun to play with – there's always a weakness to exploit or an obliterating move that emphasises your sense of power.

But, most of the time, you'll face an exasperating horde of Force-resistant enemies or an overwhelming barrage of blaster fire that pins you to the spot. Try to attack any one foe and the others whack you from behind, or shoot you from a distance. All panache or style disappears in an instant, leaving you hammering like a madman in the hope of thinning out the numbers to a manageable level.

The boss fights deserve a special mention. Every single one is a broken, horrible mess – simple arena battles where you'll never earn a victory but mindlessly bludgeon your way through to the end. There are countless button-matching mini-games, too. They're all pointless, though, because you can't fail them – they just loop until you get it

right. One of the most bizarre failings, however, has to be a bafflingly imprecise lock-on system. One boss fight was infuriating because the Force powers constantly latched onto a destructible wall, ignoring the apparently less important 50ft monster robot trying to stamp on Starkiller's face. The same robot also returns an inexcusable four times to pad out the level.

Don't get cocky kid

Some of Unleashed is undeniably kaput – and disappointingly, the hyped Digital Molecular Matter, which makes materials behave realistically, is confined to a few windows and the odd hatch – but the game got a second play through simply because it's Star Wars. And it's better second time around with all the unlocked abilities. Even basic moves, like buckling metal doors with a Force blast, satisfy because that's what you expect Jedi to do: kick ass.

It's these moments that make all the faults worthwhile because whenever you hear the 'vzzzm' of a 'saber firing up it's hard not to smile. Damn it. **Leon Hurley**

Force-o-Meter

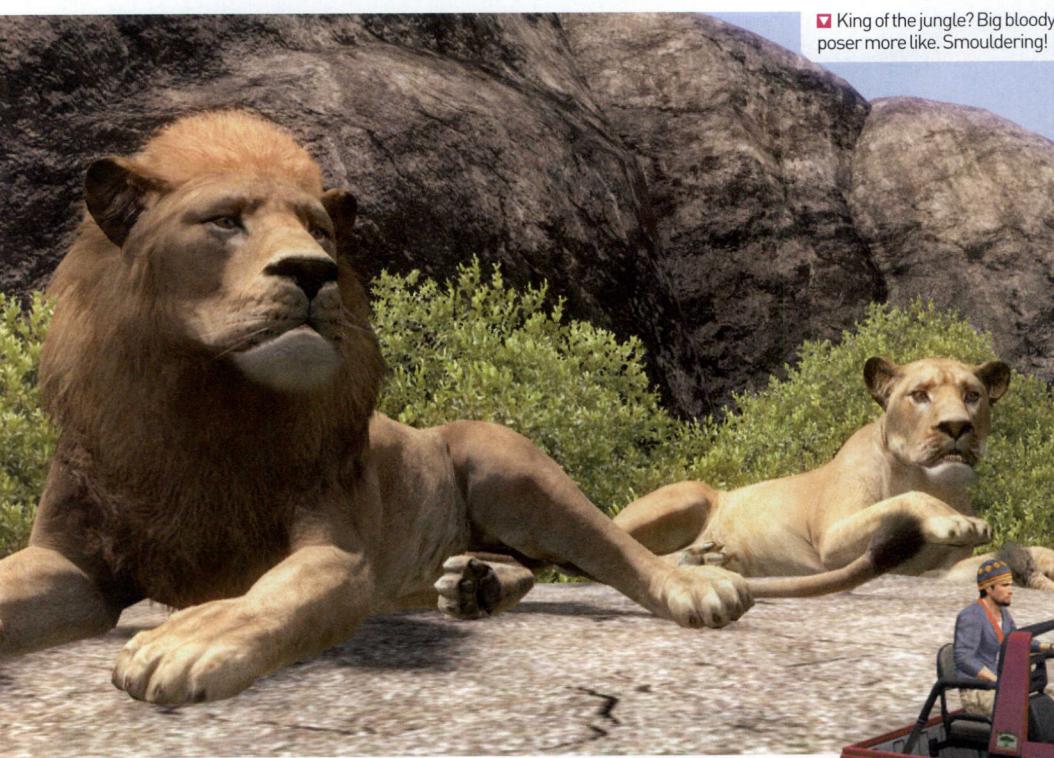
Where does The Force Unleashed rank?



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Happy snapping



Afrika

That lion's gonna yawn! Wait... waaaait... NOW!

No, you can't turn their paws into novelty ashtrays. The only shooting that happens here is the digital SLR kind. Afrika is all about respect for nature – the kind that sees you tip-toeing through bushes secretly taking pics (which is fine, apparently, when you're on safari, and not hiding in next door's garden). So this is a first-person shooter, but a polite, voyeuristic one that has you snapping beasts rather than accumulating a grand piano's worth of ivory using a scoped .308 Winchester.

Your expedition begins with a character selection screen where you choose to play as either Anna or Eric. They're both freelance photojournalists encamped in deepest Africa, but equipped with a laptop and email access through which their mission objectives are relayed. These range from fat-thumbed basics – 'take a picture of some animals' – to sophisticated special requests about specific animals and vantage points, for instance, shooting giraffes from a high angle, which can be reached by climbing a tree. As the missions get more complicated, you're

Castlist

Hunter



Cheetah

Snapping a cheetah munching a gazelle is one of your first challenges.

Fat lad



Hippo

These big boys don't move much, unless you blunder up click-clicking with your disposable camera. Run!

Digital horses



Zebra

The prettiest things in the game. Watching them gallop is like free therapy.

driven on to discover new environments and animals, while the money you earn can be put towards better cameras and equipment.

Getting khaki

Once you've accepted a mission and selected a suitable camera, Afrika leads you directly to the open bush and the 360° panoramas on which its reputation will be built. At first glance it looks implausibly good – bright African vistas stretching to the hi-def horizon – but look a little harder and the cracks start to emerge. The animals are beautiful, each one incredibly detailed and painstakingly crafted, but the infinitely stretched textures and warped background scenery spoil the otherwise near-photorealistic effect.

It's heavy on the nerves, too. The animals drift realistically from place to place, so catching up with them and nailing that perfect shot can be a real test of patience. Initially everything's on rails, with a



► Gorgeous sunsets and noble beasts – beautiful, so long as you don't look too close.



► Mission reports grade your efforts – as ever, our angle and technique need work.



Info

Format PS3 ETA Japan import Pub Sony Dev Sony Players 1 Web snipur.com/3lt00 It's like An FPS with no guns and innocent animals instead of aliens.

safari guide driving you around, showing you the sights. On-foot movement is possible from the off, but the game's locations are so huge that a vehicle is essential. It's only when you get to take control of the Suzuki yourself after you move out of your start area that the game really opens up.

If you like it quiet, Afrika's peacefulness and sense of freedom offer something to savour. But if the absence of gunfire sounds to you like the breathless scream of a thousand dying souls, you'll spend the whole game wishing you could swap your shutter lens for a sniper scope.

Either way, Afrika is an interesting experiment, and it's a shame there are currently no plans to release it beyond Japan.

Nathan Ditum

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Four-wheeled flasher

Pure

Riding dirty with Disney's SSX-inspired racer

With filthy clothes, flashy moves and Wolfmother blaring wherever it goes, this is like Motorstorm's even brattier younger brother. There's none of the aspirational glamour of racing sims here – Pure is all about caning quad bikes across mucky tracks until your brain drowns in adrenaline. The tricks are slick, the racing feels chaotic and everything from the sand up to the sky looks super-polished.

Image conscious

It's not just about being fastest, though. You need to pull off tricks to fill your Thrill Meter, which unlocks new moves and gives you extra speed when you're getting close to the finish line. There are three tiers of stunts, which are all idiot proof, and all you need to worry about is having enough time to finish the move and get back on your bike before you smash back down to Earth. The big showpiece of any race is the Assassin's Creed-style moment when you leap off a stupid-sized jump, time slows and you pull one of the invariably ludicrous signature move as the ground drops away.

Depending on the type of event you choose – race, freestyle or sprint – you'll need to balance tricks and boost differently, and you'll have to learn to master them all to climb the world tour ranks. The only trouble is, the more you play, the harder it is to



Freestyle events are perfect for show-offs who care more about points than speed.



Fancy moves are a risk. Crashes won't harm your quad, just your shot at first place.

get the initial buzz back, because tracks are repeated and the range of individual moves isn't huge. You can win new parts to customise your quads but, unless you're a total petrolhead, a new set of handlebars isn't going to make that same dirt track seem any more exciting.

It takes a while for things to get stale though, and until then this is a surprisingly strong new entrant to the off-road scene. **Rachel Weber**

Each racer has their own spine-cracking special move.



Straight to bargain bin

With **Nathan Ditum**



You know how when you play the old Street Fighter II games from way back when, they still feel pretty tight and fun? **Fatal Fury Battle Archives** isn't like that at all. It's like being beaten up by ugliness, slapped with primary colours and punched by fist-thick pixels. There are four games here – the squalid Fatal Fury 1 and 2, Fatal Fury Special (which the internet will inexplicably tell you is the best) and Fatal Fury 3: Road To The Final Victory which, like the girls my teenage self dreamed of, is prettier but also more stupid than the others. The only reason this nonsense gets endlessly re-released is because an apparently still profitable hardcore of aging arcade idiots can't be bothered to learn any moves for Tekken.

Road To The Final Victory which, like the girls my teenage self dreamed of, is prettier but also more stupid than the others. The only reason this nonsense gets endlessly re-released is because an apparently still profitable hardcore of aging arcade idiots can't be bothered to learn any moves for Tekken.

I hate **Naruto: Ultimate Ninja 3** for three reasons. Number one: because the main character is a ninja who dresses in bright orange, which is a bit like members of Delta Force ditching their desert khaki for bermuda shorts and neon socks. Two: even though I've never actually watched the cartoon or played any of the other games, the whole thing makes me feel like I'm drowning, because something Naruto-branded is released to the series' mewling pre-adolescent fanbase every ten minutes. I forgot number three... It might be because he looks like he's got whiskers. Oh, wait, it was because when you go into the first-person 'shuriken' mode in-game the peaceful villagers fade away before you can murder them.



It's funny, when I watched **The Chronicles Of Narnia: Prince Caspian** I didn't notice its lisping drama school stars doing all that much knobbing around with cogs and levers, but in the game it takes up maybe half their time. The other half is taken up with flabby repetitive fighting, pressing the same two or three buttons over and over to gut endless waves of Telmarine soldiers, which didn't just make me really bored but also – thanks to the clattering Spanish stereotyping – kind of racist too. Worst of all the bigger battles suffer from horrible lag, which feels a bit like waiting for someone with a terrible stutter to tell you the answer to something very important and then them getting it wrong.

Abomination of the month

"Why do people continue to fight? Why?" I'll tell you why, Seldous, it's because it's much more fun than listening to your stupid fur-collared orphan ass cry like a baby through endless unskippable boxes of drivelling dialogue about the evils of war. Seldous is one of the flouncy heroes of **Growlanser** – which sounds like it should be a gardening sim but is actually a rubbish RPG – and he's trying to end the fighting that plagues his homeland, apparently by mincing into combat zones and sickening the warring factions into peace. Everything wrong and boring and ugly about role-play gaming is here – turn-based combat, random monsters, endless god damn talking – so if you've any sense, this is the last thing you'll ever deliberately read about it.





media



■ COD4 + Virgin's up-to-50Mb fibre optic broadband = lag-free supremacy.

Virgin Broadband

Next-gen fragging for discerning gamers...

Another night, another marathon Call Of Duty 4 session. You've finally scoped out the hateful sniper who's been pwning your team with a cold eye and withered husk of a heart, and crept into position inch by painstaking inch. He's toast. Your finger slowly depresses the trigger and... Eh?! One moment he's crouching, helpless, under your crosshairs, the next he suddenly, *impossibly*, flits out of harm's way, safe to kill another day. The dreaded lag strikes again. You've lost the match, your team has been humiliated, and all because your sister's been hogging precious bandwidth uploading photos of her new emo friends to Facebook. War may be hell, but sluggish broadband blows like a wind tunnel. We've all been there, and it hurts.

Mercifully, thanks to Virgin Media's new, up-to-50Mb fibre optic broadband, rolling out from later this year, tragic gaming injustices like this will soon be a thing of the past. With fibre optics, latency and lag are all but eliminated, meaning no more lucky escapes for your online adversaries, super low ping rates and frag counts that'll soar into the stratosphere. Whether you're downloading demos from PlayStation Network, uploading your latest LittleBigPlanet creation or taking on all-comers on COD4, get ready to enjoy dizzying speeds. Even better, Virgin Media's up-to-50Mb broadband is so fast all the family can play, listen, watch and surf simultaneously – so arguments are also off the agenda. But you may need to explain why you're wearing camo paint...

Welcome to fibre optic. Welcome to the Mother of all Broadband.

What does up to 50Mb mean to you?

The Virgin Media boffins are justifiably proud of their fibre optic broadband technology, but in case you need any more convincing we'll let the figures do the talking. Imagine downloading an entire album in ten seconds, a song in one second, a TV show in just one minute, a DVD-sized game in under 12 minutes or an HD movie in around 15 minutes. Imagine YouTube without... those... incredibly... irritating... pauses. Or totally lag-free sessions on COD4. Or all of the above, almost all at once. Want a piece of that future-proof pie? Sign up with Virgin Media.

Can I Get It?

Until up to 50Mb comes your way, you can choose from three broadband packages, all with the low latency fibre optic advantage: up to 2Mb, 10Mb and 20Mb. Prices start at £4.50 a month when you take a Virgin phone line for £11 a month.

For more info and to check if your street is cabled, call **0800 052 2525** or go to virginmedia.com/mother.

See - fibre is good for you...



There are two main types of broadband in this world: copper wire and fibre optic. The former has been knocking about since the 1870s, the latter uses strands of pure glass as thin as human hair to transmit data at the speed of light. One is struggling to keep up with the demands of today's web – the other is from Virgin Media. Point your browser at the URL below to see how the magic works...

www.virginmedia.com/mother

Prices quoted are for payment by Direct Debit and e-billing. Services available in Virgin Media cabled streets only. Subject to network capacity, minimum term contract. Up to 2Mb is £4.50 a month for your first 12 months. Standard prices apply thereafter. Offer for a limited period only. Up to 10Mb roll out due to complete 09/08. Speed of internet connection assumes components working at optimum speed and capacity. Both cable and ADSL broadband are affected by user volume. Acceptable use policy applies. Installation charges apply. Information correct at 08/08.



International Track & Field

Format PSN download ETA Out now Pub Konami

 There's a good reason why human mecha-dolphin Michael Phelps has 14 more gold medals than the total amassed by Team OPM. While he presumably spent his youth training hard, piling on the carbs (we tried that, but with different results) and being a genetic freak, we achieved the same goal by learning the best way to hammer @ and X at superhuman speed. (Turn joypad. Place snugly under shirt. Use right forefinger to flick between buttons. Voila!) So if Phelps ever



wants to put his medals on the line where it *really* counts – across 11 events of old-skool button mashing fun, on a PS1 game we still love despite the ancient graphics – we'll be waiting. At £3.49, he can definitely afford to get some practice in first. **Ben Wilson**

PlayStation.
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Driver

Format PSN download ETA Out now Pub Ubisoft

 So the PS1-era graphics are so lo-res they look like they've been knitted, and the monumental pop up sees entire blocks of real estate teleport into view as if they weren't ready for your arrival; still, when it comes to entertainment Driver makes its £3.49 PSN entry fee feel like a steal. The genius here is the muscle-car handling – all hair-trigger rear-end slides and palpable inertia. Simultaneously challenging and stupidly fun, it constantly reminds you why this mission-



based tale of undercover cop turned wheelman for hire was such an instant classic. Port it to your PSP to make a virtue of the D-pad controls and to minimise the graphical shortcomings, and it's even better. **Paul Fitzpatrick**

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R-Type Tactics

Format PSP ETA Out now Pub Rising Star Games

 Like strawberries and ketchup, mixing the grid-based strategy of Final Fantasy Tactics with R-Type's arcade shoot-'em-up formula shouldn't work, and despite some nice ideas, for the most part it doesn't. The main issues are obvious from the very beginning: there's no real tutorial (only a selection of optional, dry text briefings) the presentation remains po-faced throughout, and the atmosphere relentlessly bleak. The more you play the more you realise that the best



approach to victory is nearly always just to gang-blast one enemy unit at a time. With little point in a tactical withdrawal, all the missions start to feel the same. This experiment comes off as a blind alley in the otherwise magnificent R-Type saga. **Michael Gapper**

PlayStation.
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Release Schedule

Coming soon to a PlayStation near you

Publisher	ETA	Format
EA	30 Oct	Multi
Activision	10 Oct	PS3
Warner Bros	10 Oct	PS3
EA	10 Oct	Multi
Sega	17 Oct	PS3
Konami	17 Oct	PS3
THQ	17 Oct	PS3
Take Two	24 Oct	PS3
EA	24 Oct	PS3
Bethesda	24 Oct	PS3
Ubisoft	24 Oct	PS3
Rockstar	24 Oct	PS3
Sony	24 Oct	PS3
Ubisoft	31 Oct	PS3
Sony	31 Oct	PS3
Activision	31 Oct	PS3
Capcom	Oct	PS3
Konami	Oct	PS3
Activision	7 Nov	PS3
Ubisoft	7 Nov	PS3
THQ	7 Nov	Multi
Sega	14 Nov	PSP
EA	14 Nov	PS3
Sony	14 Nov	PS3
Codemasters	14 Nov	PS3
Sega	14 Nov	PS3
EA	21 Nov	PS3
Eidos	21 Nov	Multi
Atari	28 Nov	PS3
Activision	Nov	PS3
Atari	Nov	PS3
EA	Nov	PS3
Sony	Nov	PS3
Sony	Nov	PSN
Sony	Feb 09	PS3
EA	Feb 09	PS3
Capcom	Mar 09	PS3
Ubisoft	Mar 09	PS3
THQ	Mar 09	PS3
Sony	2009	PS3
Activision	2009	PS3
EA	2009	PS3
Capcom	2009	PS3
Atari	2009	PS3
Sony	2009	PS3

! All release dates are accurate at time of press but liable to change.

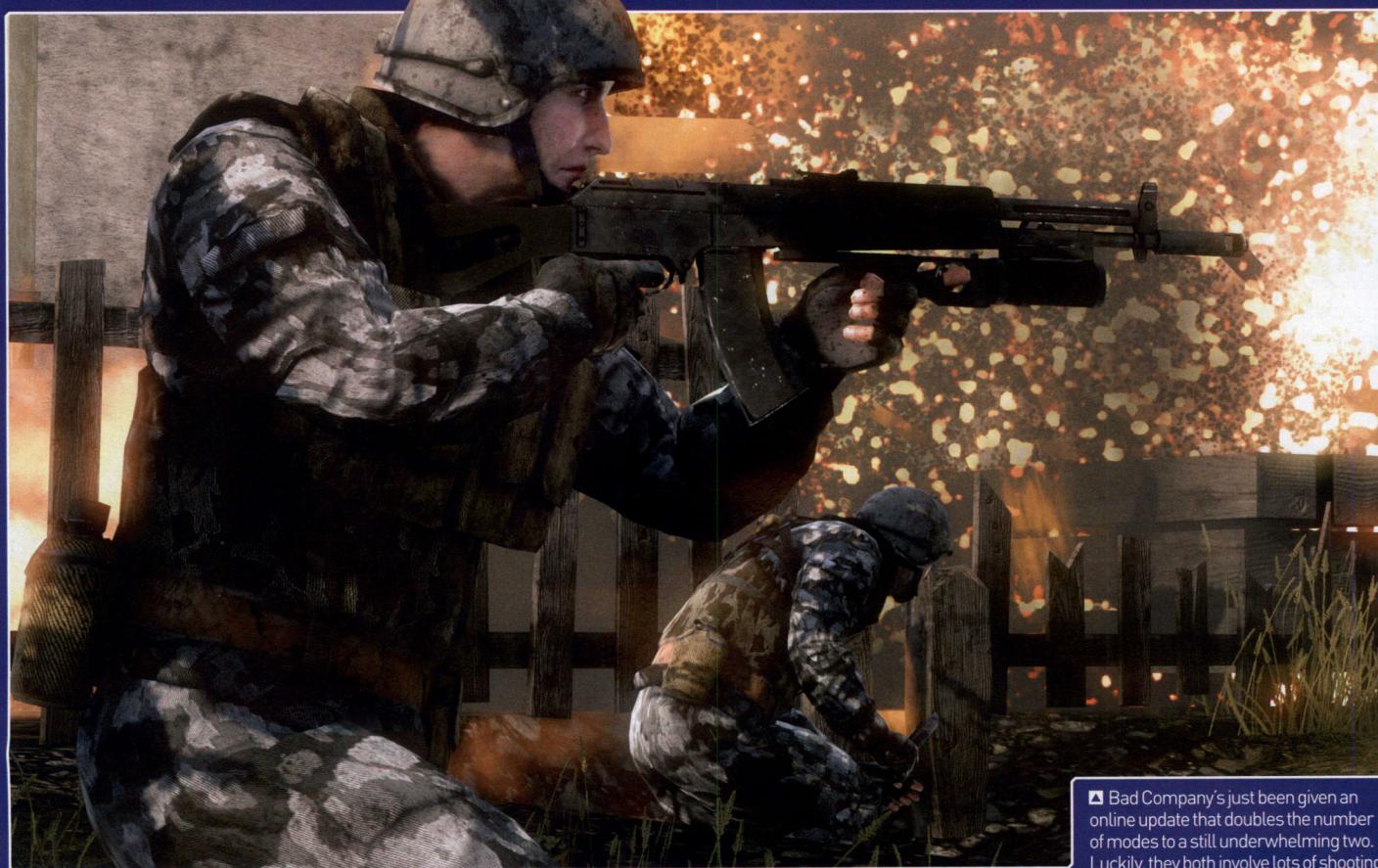


READY MADE EXCUSE #23

Pull a sickie for... Bioshock

ff What with all the trouble with mother... No idea why her B&B guests keep leaving without paying... it's best if I stay home for a few days.





Bad Company's just been given an online update that doubles the number of modes to a still underwhelming two. Luckily, they both involve lots of shooting.

120

Bog of war

Battlefield Bad Company

Gold! But unlike the song, you're far from indestructible...



Info

Format PS3 ETA Out now Pub EA Dev Dice
Players 2-24 Web
badcompany.ea.com
It's like An ongoing conflict, set in the same location, that lasts forever.

Atank has just blown away your demolitions team. The wall that offered some shelter has collapsed under an artillery barrage. Three assault troops are sprinting for the defenceless gold crates and an enemy helicopter has just appeared in your weedy sniper reticle. Uh-oh. But a forgotten set of charges suddenly buries the assault team under two tonnes of masonry, a surface-to-air missile turns the chopper into fireworks, and rockets begin smashing against the tank from three directions. All this has taken about five seconds.

You haven't fired a shot. Welcome to Battlefield: Bad Company online.

Divide and conquer

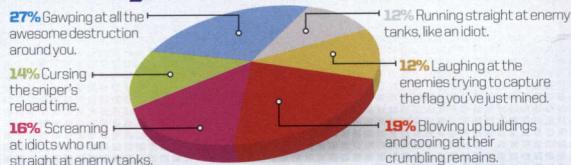
If this particular brand of organised chaos sounds punch-the-air exciting, it's because it is... to begin with. There are two ways to leap into online Battlefield. The first is Gold Rush, which launched with the game, where one team tries to destroy a pair of targets that the other team defends, over a total of five rounds. And a recent update has also added an old Battlefield favourite, Conquest. Here there are five flags, and each team has a 'health' bar: controlling more flags than your enemy makes their bar go down faster than yours, and when one reaches the bottom, that team loses.

Of the two, Conquest is undeniably superior. It seems more suited to Bad Company's big explosions and flowing exchanges than Gold Rush, which often

descends into attritional camping. However, shrinking the existing maps means games are much shorter – often barely five minutes long – and gives each location a totally different feel. Despite the general lack of chat, there's an understanding of how to play on each map – the long, thin Oasis, for example, is a dream for snipers and forces constant zigzagging from small teams between buildings. End Of The Line, on the other hand, is a really meaty piece of terrain full of dips and bumps, where some tidy grenades and clever tank traps can see you win in three minutes.

But that lack of talk is a pain. BC doesn't have the noisiest community, which is noticeable in a game that depends on co-ordination. This might be because of the inexplicable omission of a full team chat function: regardless, it's a strangely quiet atmosphere to come into after COD4's mayhem. On

What you do in... Bad Company





❑ The HUD is crammed with the sort of info updates you'd see if you were a robot soldier.



❑ The silencers are a bit like cushions strapped to rockets – so still really, really loud.

the plus side, when experienced players are around they're happy to direct new recruits and, in particular, tell you about cheap tactics for each class (you can change before respawning). More impressively, connecting takes next to no time – it takes longer to load the map than it does to find a game – and lag didn't rear its ugly head once during my extended sessions; nor did I have any trouble finding a small team and sticking with them for a few hours.

New maps, please

The only problem is a lack of variety. When the Harvest Day map comes up for the 15th time Bad Company begins to feel a bit like all its elements are mushing together. Conquest may have changed the criteria for winning, but it desperately needs dedicated maps rather than locations designed for Gold Rush's constant onwards movement – and even then, you only get four out of Gold Rush's

eight. It can blend into vanilla deathmatch far too easily, with the to-and-froing that makes a good capture the flag match absent as everyone fights for a single flag in the centre. That's not to say that Battlefield ever stops becoming a blast, but constantly playing the same maps and modes can end up ruined by that all-too-familiar combination of 'camping', 'teabagging', and 'Americans'.

Next to the multitude of online content that Call Of Duty 4 offers, Bad Company's focus feels a little narrow. But there's certainly gold in them thar hills, and enough that it's worth rushing for – that rock-solid foundation of exhilarating destruction, taking an annoying sniper out of their tower by destroying the tower, never gets old. And with its first boost of DLC

Battlefield: Bad Company is a frantic, bombastic and fiery experience that always leaves you wanting a bit more – just not always in a good way. **Rich Stanton**

PlayStation.
Official Magazine UK

7



Online round-up

With **Leon Hurley**



I've discovered an important rule in **Mercenaries 2: World In**

Flames' co-op mode: if you're going to drop a nuclear bomb, check where your mate is first. Somehow the guilt of seeing them burn up in a mushroom cloud never quite washes off. Although, with the amount of carnage here, there's always potential for... accidents. Imagine every explosion you've ever seen in a film going off at once and it'll still be like watching Mercs 2's multiplayer through a welder's mask. You can revive downed teammates when the smoke clears but there are always trust issues afterwards. Oh, and just to be clear, using a Daisy Cutter isn't the same as sending Interflora to say sorry.

There's almost no one playing **Dark Sector** online. So why do I love it? Because poke around enough and you'll eventually uncover someone playing a multiplayer match *on their own*. As far as I can tell they're basically pretending to be good at games by slaughtering endless waves of mindless bots. Hence my new hobby. I join their game, sneak around behind them and absolutely murderise them repeatedly. Usually they don't even click I'm not a bot and can't understand why their turkey shoot has started to bite back. Good times.



After seeing Skate 2 in action I thought I'd go back to the original **Skate** and test the online mode, something I ignored first time around. And now I know Skate's dirty little secret. No one can play the damn game. Occasionally someone might pull off an 8,000-

point combo, but it'll be more by luck than judgement. Every match I play – especially the Own The Spot competitions – is a catalogue of crunchy, bone-shattering failure. It's embarrassing watching accident after accident happen. No wonder everyone leaves after a couple of matches – it's the shame of it. Even the uploaded in-game videos, easily the best feature, consist mainly of crashes, glitches and skaters bouncing off pedestrians' heads.

Download of the month

Last time I played a golf game it looked like it was made out of Lego and repeated the same two-second crowd noise sample for all eternity. I think it loaded from a C90 cassette. So, I haven't 'played the back nine' in a while. Not until Kratos appeared in **Everybody's Golf World Tour**. I have no idea who thought it would be a good idea to shove a homicidal warrior, soaked in the blood of a thousand victims, into a cutesy golf game, but despite the ridiculous premise, you can't deny that it is funny watching the Ghost Of Sparta growl "Curse you, Athena!" at the heavens whenever he lands in the rough.





▲ Babsy Torres, obviously. Teams and positions will be finalised post-selection.



Join our FIFA team today

Get your shinpads on and play in the OPM XI

After last month's exclusive review of FIFA 09 we've been looking forward to getting a taste of the new 10 vs 10 online mode. Like Arsenal's midfield, though, the problem is that we're desperately short of men. Luckily, unlike the maddeningly frugal Wenger, we're not afraid to splash out in the transfer market [it beats explaining the rules of football to OPM's Leon 'RPG' Hurley]. And that's where you come in.

We're looking for readers to join us to form the inaugural OPM Be A Pro XI,

which will compete in EA's forthcoming FIFA 09 10 vs 10 Online Challenge. There might even be the occasional appearance from a pro footballer [talks are in progress, the board is being cagey].

To get involved head on over to gamesradar.com/fifa09onlinechallenge and enter your details [and don't everyone put their position down as 'in the hole' – we've got three men there already]. The team will be announced next issue along with the first round of fixtures. Let's make some beautiful football, people.



Sign up for our FIFA 09 side now

gamesradar.com/fifa09onlinechallenge



lastnext...

Back issues

There's no need to miss out



Issue #021
August 2008

17-page shooters special, Battlefield: Bad Company review, new Sony boss talks to OPM, and exclusive looks at inFamous, PES 2009 and Resi 5.



Issue #022
September 2008

14 pages of E3 coverage, exclusive Mirror's Edge hands-on and interview, Soulcalibur IV review, MAG unveiled, and EA's sports king talks to OPM.



Issue #023
October 2008

14-page Street Fighter guide, DC Universe Online, exclusive FIFA 09 review, Heavy Rain revealed, and Metal Gear creator Hideo Kojima talks to OPM.

To order an issue of any Official PlayStation magazine, just call **0844 848 2852** or visit myfavouritemagazines.co.uk

Next month in...

PlayStation® Official Magazine - UK



Far Cry 2 reviewed
Next year's hottest
PSN games revealed
First Deus Ex 3
screenshots
Infinity Ward
interviewed

All contents subject to change

Resistance 2

Exclusive review

Better than Call Of Duty 4?



Wars universes don't connect in any logical way... but play the story mode! Then you learn that Vader was drawn through a portal by the power of the soul blades which, considering all the other crazy stuff that goes on, makes sense. He complains that the Star Wars characters are only in the games for money making purposes... So? In SC3 you had the choice of being the old guy from Tekken, Link from Zelda or Spawn. They've done this marketing ploy before, why is it so evil this time round? Then there's the biggest and worst argument of all – lightsabers would cut through so and so's shield/sword/etc, and the Force would rip Lizardman's skin off. Duh! Nightmare's big sword would cut someone in half – you couldn't defend that with nunchucks! 'Calibur isn't meant to be realistic – you don't see limbs flying off because it's not that sort of game. Can you imagine cutting off people's limbs Monty Python-style until your opponent couldn't fight anymore? It wouldn't work.

Laura Varley, by email

Sorry, you had us until "Vader was drawn through a portal by the soul blades"...

Lone wolf

Who thought making Resident Evil 5 into a co-op game could possibly be a good idea? I know it was god-awful but has everyone forgotten about Resi Outbreak? Never mind the fact that a 'survival horror' game is supposed to be a solo effort for player and character alike, Capcom clearly do not have a clue how to make it work... online or offline. I don't want to be running away from zombies/parasites/insane grey haired midgets while wondering if that bus conductor with the lucky coins is keeping up or looking for ammo on shelves. I don't want to try and persuade someone in Tibet to give it another hour of wandering around the sewers looking for another key to open the drawers so I can win the gangster outfit with the cool hat. If I were to play Medal Of Honor, going in with a squad of mates to capture a hill would make perfect sense, but I don't, I play zombie games where you are in the middle of nowhere, all alone. Still, at least the game can't suck more than Jill's Haiku at the start of Nemesis.

Robert Dickinson, by email

As much as we *like* the idea of co-op, the reality – awkward small talk, lag turning the game into a flipbook – make us fear Resi 5 may be about to mess up.



▀ Vader's helmet is now all dusty in our copy of 'calibur'.



Q What type of video files will work on my PlayStation 3?

A You can play MPEGs, MP4s, AVI files, DivX, AVCHD, WMV and VC-1. If you are having problems playing certain videos it may be that they are rights protected, or you need to change your System Settings.

▀ Chris Redfield: the kind of man who prefers going solo?



Customer service

It seems we are in a completely different world now from the time when a developer would release a game and, the moment the champagne corks had hit the floor, begin work on its next title. Now the trend is for developers to continue to tweak, in some cases subtly and in other cases taking the game far beyond what went into the box. I'd love to know which games can be expanded on the most. I take my hat off to Criterion Games for their superb support for Burnout: Paradise. They have improved the interface, kept us up to speed via their podcasts, enhanced online, and this month are releasing bike support and day/night cycles. With an entire island planned for the end of the year this is a game I still can't get enough of. Who else out there has that level of support without wanting me to part with another £40?

Jamie Harrison, by email

Criterion's efforts are exemplary, and shame those of most other devs, whose idea of 'post-release support' seems more like leaving a naked baby on a hillside in order to toughen it up.

Spoiler warning!

I am a man, and as a man I can admit to a few things. I just completed Final Fantasy: Crisis Core and I was amazed by it... so much so I couldn't stop crying. The thing is I knew Zack was going to die, but when it happened it moved me to tears. Why can't all games be like that? There was so much to do, and a fantastic story line too. And it was on PSP. I couldn't help thinking how much better it would have been if it had been on PS3, but still, it has to be one of the best games on the handheld.

Sean Gallacher, by email

What? Zack dies?!

Off the Wall



Choice cuts from the OPM Facebook group

Will argue for £££ "It's £1 for a five-minute argument but only £8 for a course of ten."

Iain Wilson

Pixel junkie "Eden's awesome and once the other half finishes her go on SSHD and the dog's been walked, I'll be doing a spot of gardening."

Me Durr

God Of War III wins "Large, severely unhinged, bald Spartan running round Olympus choppin' up fools into handy god-sized chunks. There is absolutely no possibility this game wont pwn."

Kenneth Talbot

Siren call "No game has ever got to me quite like this and playing as the girl with nothing to defend yourself really got me on edge."

Allan Hayes

Dirty talk "I know other things, but I keep them close to my chest. Like the curry stains on my t-shirt."

Matt Brown

Money matters "I remember Little Nemo on the NES costing me £39.99. Honestly, we've never had it so good."

Chris Osborne

Send your questions to: opm@futurenet.co.uk





PS3

Essential collection

Build the ultimate PS3 library with our no-filler guide to the best next-gen games so far

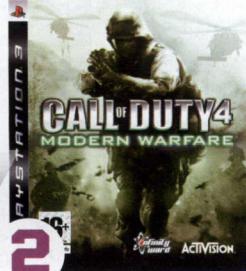


Action

Grand Theft Auto IV

It's everything you love about GTA – the twisted characters, epic missions and savage humour – polished to perfection. A true modern masterpiece.

10 Pub Rockstar Games
Dev Rockstar North

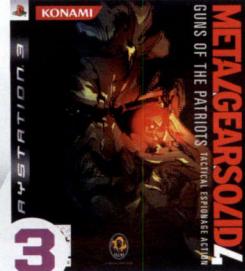


Shooter

Call Of Duty 4: Modern Warfare

Take on terrorists as the SAS and US Marines as Call Of Duty dumps WW2 for a contemporary setting. This is a beautiful, brutal and near flawless shooter.

10 Pub Activision
Dev Infinity Ward

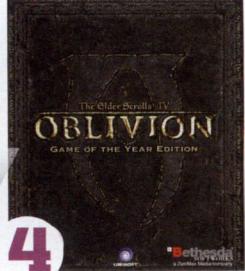


Stealth

Metal Gear Solid 4: Guns Of The Patriots

A typically esoteric but masterful end to Snake's saga, blending beautifully immersive action with a lifetime's worth of cut-scenes. Divisive but essential.

10 Pub Konami
Dev Konami Productions

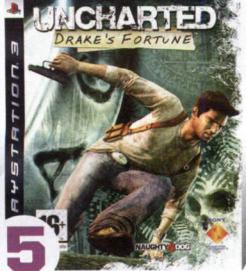


4

Oblivion: Game Of The Year Edition

An adventure so vast and all-consuming you'll lose months to its quests and battles. Now with the Knights Of The Nine and Shivering Isles expansion packs.

10 Pub Bethesda Softworks
Dev Bethesda Softworks



Action-Adventure

Uncharted: Drake's Fortune

Treasure hunter Nathan Drake is after the fabled gold of El Dorado in this superb blend of action and puzzles. Think Gears Of War meets Tomb Raider. Then buy.

9 Pub Sony
Dev Naughty Dog

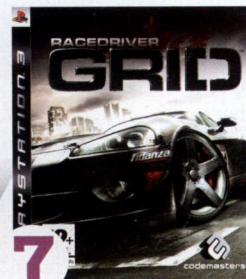


Platformer

Ratchet & Clank: Tools Of Destruction

Platforming royalty return to save the galaxy. Exquisite graphics and a riotous arsenal of comedy weapons make this the pair's best interstellar outing yet.

9 Pub Sony
Dev Insomniac Games



Racer

Race Driver Grid

Straight from the TOCA garage and into first place. It's the smooth mechanics, aggressive races and fine tuned cars that make this the best racer currently on PS3.

9 Pub Codemasters
Dev Codemasters



Music

SingStar

Sony's much-loved karaoke game steps up to next-gen with a neater interface, online options and tons of tunes via SingStore. Outkast's Hey Ya and Killers' Mr Brightside are highlights.

9 Pub Sony
Dev SCE Studios London



Sports

FIFA 09

Strong core gameplay on the pitch, ten-on-ten online matches and a new multi-season Be A Pro mode make this the top-scoring football choice on PS3.

9 Pub EA
Dev EA Canada



Fighter

Soulcalibur IV

Darth Vader aside, this is essential stuff. The swordplay is as accessible and strong as ever, with deep character customisation and online play completing the package.

9 Pub Ubisoft
Dev Namco

PS3 Curses



Conan
Makes a wizard angry, then regrets it when Mr Magic steals his armour.



Ratchet & Clank: Quest For Booty
Our favourite Lombax loses his robot sidekick and gets knee deep in undead pirates.



Heavenly Sword
Nariko might be pretty but she comes with baggage, namely a huge magic sword that kills anyone who wields it.

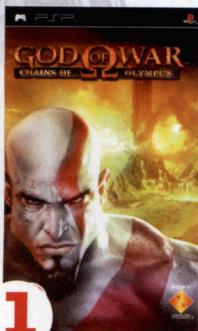


The Darkness
At least gangster Jackie's burden comes with monster tentacles – perfect for killing in those hard-to-reach places.



PSP Essential collection

Ten indispensable games for your handheld – try them or buy them, just make sure you play them



1

Action-Adventure
God Of War
Chains Of Olympus

Bloody, god-slaying prequel that matches the PS2 games' vibrant visuals and frantic hack and slash action.

10 Pub Sony
Dev Ready At Dawn

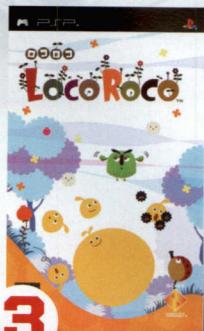


2

Strategy
Final Fantasy Tactics
The War Of Lions

A genuinely gripping plot, delicious-looking visuals and the oceanic job system make this the best Fantasy so far.

10 Pub Square Enix
Dev Square Enix



3

Platformer
LocoRoco

Tilt a 2D world to guide a growing, smiley-faced blob to safety while sugary Japan-o-pop tickles your ears. Rolls all over Me & My Katamari.

10 Pub Sony
Dev SCE Studios Japan

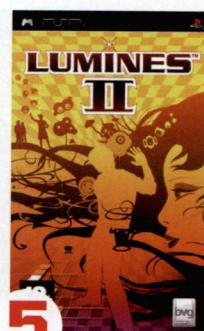


4

Free-Roaming
Grand Theft Auto
Vice City Stories

Everything you'd expect from GTA, only smaller. Compelling missions on foot or behind the wheel, plus plenty of '80s tunes.

10 Pub Rockstar
Dev Rockstar Leeds

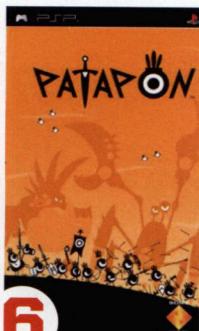


5

Puzzler
Lumines II

Move blocks and clear the screen to a brilliantly eclectic soundtrack. New features and modes improve an addictive fusion of music and puzzling.

9 Pub Buena Vista
Dev Q Entertainment



6

Rhythm
Patapon

Scrolling 2D battles with a side order of crazy. Control your army of eyeballs with different drum beats, taking on rival tribes and huge monochrome monsters.

9 Pub Sony
Dev Pyramid/Interlink



7

Fighter
Tekken
Dark Resurrection

With stunning looks, loads of mini-games and new moves, this offers some of the best multiplayer action on PSP.

9 Pub Sony
Dev Namco

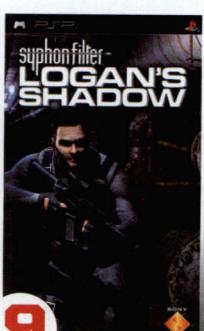


8

Platformer
Ratchet & Clank
Size Matters

The duo's handheld debut is a platforming riot. Uproarious weapons and compelling levels make this a must-have hit.

9 Pub Sony
Dev High Impact Games



9

Stealth-Strategy
Syphon Filter
Logan's Shadow

A top-class stealth sequel. Gabe returns with new weapons, new moves and the news that his partner could be a double agent.

9 Pub Sony
Dev Sony Bend



10

Platformer
Lego Star Wars II
The Original Trilogy

Retelling the best three Star Wars movies in Lego. Play it for the platform fun or the hilarious spoofs of classic scenes.

9 Pub LucasArts
Dev Traveller's Tales

PSP
Robots



Secret Agent Clank

Ratchet's metallic sidekick gets a 007-style adventure.



Wall-E

Robot-on-robot action as Pixar's superstar trash compactor falls in love.



Transformers
The Game

Be a Decepticon! Be an Autobot! Be bored of the robot smashing.



Innocent Life
A Futuristic Harvest Moon

An android learns lessons about life, love and cattle.



Hi-Def Directory

Ensure your PS3 games and Blu-ray movies look their best with a lovely new HDTV. Go on, you deserve it...

Plasma Best buys

**£553*****Panasonic TH-37PX80B**

Unusual to describe anything north of 500 sheets as incredible value – but this is, and if you're serious about HD it's a perfect way to get involved. Not 1080p, but at this size you won't notice, and for our money the picture quality shames its LCD rivals.

Size 37" Native resolution 1,024 x 720 1080p No**Connections 3xHDMI, 1xComponent, 1xComposite, 1xS-Video, 2xSCART, 1xPC Input, Freesat****£1,027****Panasonic TH-42PZ80B**

Just a couple of years back you'd have been paying three large for a plasma this big, and without the ace picture Panasonic is now serving up. Best of all, it features built-in Freesat so you can watch HD content from the BBC and ITV.

Size 42" Native resolution 1,920 x 1,080 1080p Yes**Connections 3xHDMI, 1xComponent, 1xComposite, 1xS-Video, 2xSCART, 1xPC Input, Freesat****£2,397****Pioneer PDP-LX5090**

We love Pio plasmas like Jesus loves sinners, and the Japanese firm's ninth-gen panel shames other HDTVs with its obsidian black levels, rich colours and sumptuous motion handling. Seriously, that Post Office wants to be robbed.

Size 50" Native resolution 1,920 x 1,080 1080p Yes**Connections 3xHDMI, 1xComponent, 1xS-Video, 3xSCART, 1xPC Input, 1xUSB input**

LCD Best buys

**£655****Sony KDL32W4000**

There are cheaper sets available for less money and at bigger sizes, but this entry level Bravia won't be beaten on picture quality, and gives you the satisfaction of having all your kit Sony-badged. Even the menus are based on PS3's XMB.

Size 32" Native resolution 1,920 x 1,080 1080p Yes**Connections 3xHDMI, 1xComponent, 1xComposite, 2xSCART, 1xS-video, 1xPC Input, 1xUSB input, Freesat****£759****Samsung LE40A656**

Sammies remain impressive players on the LCD scene, and this mid-range set combines bold design (loving the rose-tinted finish) with deep blacks and confident motion-handling. Plus, four HDMI sockets means the future is your friend.

Size 40" Native resolution 1,920 x 1,080 1080p Yes**Connections 4xHDMI, 1xComponent, 1xComposite, 2xSCART, 1xS-video, 1xPC Input, Freesat****£1,899****Sony KDL-52W4000**

Desperate to give Uncle Sony some more shiny dollars? This superb Bravia will enrage your other half with its imperial-sized proportions, but at least you can claim the frame looks elegant. That's right, enormous and elegant.

Size 52" Native resolution 1,920 x 1,080 1080p Yes**Connections 3xHDMI, 1xComponent, 1xComposite, 2xSCART, 1xPC Input, 1xUSB input, Freesat**

Essential Blu-ray movies

**The Orphanage**

Spanish chiller set in a Victorian orphanage. Hessian death mask children and nasty shocks make for a brilliantly spooky atmosphere.

**Ratatouille**

The digital source material means Ratatouille is a show-stopping looker. It's about a Parisian rat who wants to make it as a chef.

**Juno**

Warm but emotionally wrought comedy about a smart-mouthed teenager who falls pregnant with her goofy bandmate. Loveliness ensues.

FAQ

Do I need an HDTV to play PS3?

Simple answer: no. You can connect your PS3 to almost any standard definition TV using the composite lead supplied with the console. Do yourself a favour, though, and upgrade to a superior RGB SCART lead. However, to see PS3 games in all their glory, we massively recommend getting an HDTV. Don't even consider buying a flatscreen without the 'HD ready' badge, because it ensures you'll get the right sockets to hook up in hi-def.

How does PS3 look on a normal TV?

Even in standard definition, the jump from PS2 to PS3 impresses. You were happy with how your PS2 looked through SCART on a normal TV, right? Assuming you're using the same set-up, PS3 games are going to look that much better because the machine is so much more powerful. More problematic is playing old games on an HDTV, because they have a lower resolution and the image therefore has to be upscaled and processed. The end result can be a smeared, blurry picture.

720p/1080i/1080p... WTF does it all mean?

These are the different flavours of hi-def signal. The numbers refer to the amount of horizontal lines in the picture; the more lines there are, the higher the detail. As for the letters, 'i' means a progressively scanned image, which is more stable and smooth because each frame is drawn in its entirety, whereas 'p' is an interlaced signal that rapidly switches between the odd and even horizontal lines of an image, giving the impression of a full frame. Roughly speaking, 720p is best for fast motion but 1080i suits more static, detailed visuals with 1080p therefore being the best of both worlds and ultimate daddy.

Do I need a 1080p compatible set?

It's certainly not essential. At present, only top-end HDTVs are capable of displaying 1080p, and games that support the signal, such as *Ridge Racer 7* and *Virtua Tennis 3*, are in the minority – but as time goes by that will change. However, there's an argument to say that for anything less than super-sized screens (say, below 46") the difference between 720p and 1080p is actually pretty negligible – and certainly nowhere near the quantum shift you get going from standard to hi-def.

Should I buy an LCD or plasma?

The variation in quality between models and manufacturers means there's no easy answer. LCD screens tend to have higher resolutions (good news if you're after 1080p), are lightweight and cost less at



larger screen sizes. However, the blacks can look slightly washed out and some LCD panels struggle with fast motion. Plasma, contrastingly, deals with motion confidently and delivers rich black and vibrant colours – but the sets are chunkier and guzzles power. There's also a slight risk of screen burn, when on-screen information (such as an energy bar) remains as an afterimage, although the problem isn't usually permanent. Forced to choose? We'd probably plump for a 42" Pioneer or Panasonic plasma. But if you're paying we'll have a 46" Bravia X-series LCD.

How big should my TV be?

Big is always best. You also need to consider the size of your room and budget, though. The size of flat-panel screens mean you'll want to sit further back than you did with your old TV. As a rough measurement, multiply the diagonal size of the screen by three and it will give you an idea of how far away to plonk the La-Z-Boy. So for a 42" screen you should sit it about 10ft back.

How do I make my PS3 run hi-def?

Connect any HDMI cable between your PS3 and your HDTV and the console will automatically recognise it and ask if you want to display hi-def. Say yes, obviously. It should also check the maximum resolution your panel supports, but this can also be tweaked in the display settings menu on the XMB. If you're connecting via Component you'll also need to go into the same menu and select that option under Display Settings, after which you'll be asked to choose which HD resolution to use.

Help, the screen has gone blank!

Assuming everything's on and all the leads are connected, you've probably selected the wrong resolution. Switch the unit to standby and then turn it on by holding the power button for five seconds until you hear a bleep. If an HDMI lead's plugged in the PS3 will detect it. Otherwise it'll revert to the standard AV output using a composite lead.

Getting connected

You've got the hardware, now hook it all up

HDMI

Transmits hi-def video and audio as a pure digital signal – the best possible connection. These don't come with PS3 and will set you back around £20.



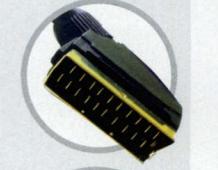
Component

These cables deliver an analogue signal capable of carrying hi-def video. Three separate wires are used for the red, green and blue picture information.



RGB/SCART

This is used for the standard audiovisual connection. It's analogue-only, but provides a crisp and clear picture that will serve you well. It won't deliver that hi-def crispness though.



S-Video

This splits the analogue video signal into chrominance (colour) and luminance (light), resulting in a better picture compared with a standard composite lead.



Composite

Bog-standard analogue signal. Picture quality is fuzzy and prone to colour bleed. It's also the lead you get in the PS3 box. Cheers! Do yourself a favour: upgrade immediately.



Optical

This is a laser-powered, audio-only connection used to send digital sound to your TV or home cinema amp for deep bass and crystal-clear effects.



HD choice



Humax HD Freesat box

Over 130 channels with no subscription, and because it's a satellite signal there's enough bandwidth for hi-def content. Unfortunately, at present that only means BBC HD and ITV's near non-existent contribution.

Price £140.25 **Channels** 130+ **Stockist** amazon.co.uk **Resolution** 1080i, 720p, 576p, 576i **Website** humaxdigital.com



No Country For Old Men

Drug money, determinism vs free will and super bad hair in the Coens' super-dark Western.



Blade Runner Final Cut

Tech-noir thriller with Harrison Ford hunting down robot people in a neon-bathed future LA.



The Prestige

Blu-ray lights up the sumptuous Victorian setting of this smart thriller between two magicians locked in a deadly rivalry.



There Will Be Blood

A huge performance from Daniel Day Lewis anchors this dark, unsettling oil epic. Large on ideas, small on sentiment, and beautiful to look at.



Sephiroth

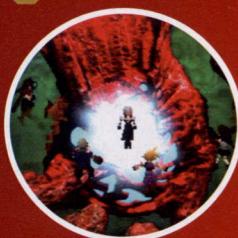
The ultimate villain

He may have lovely silver hair and suspiciously feminine bone structure, but Sephiroth is a man. A man who can summon entire planets to drop on your head. Also deadly with his suggestively long Masamune katana, this First Class soldier devastated the world of Gaia in the legendary PS1 RPG Final Fantasy VII. His icy demeanour and ongoing clashes with FF hero Cloud have secured his place as one of the greatest mwa-hahing villains on PlayStation.

Terrifying in...

Final Fantasy VII

This is where Sephiroth's legacy began. Already known and feared throughout Midgar as the ultimate soldier, he summons a meteorite to destroy the planet. Nasty.



Crisis Core: Final Fantasy VII

The prequel to Final Fantasy VII sees the silver haired warrior before he turns to the dark side, and showcases his final days as a Shinra Soldier, when he's actually quite a nice bloke.



Kingdom Hearts II

During this Final Fantasy/Disney hybrid, kid hero Sora finds Sephiroth prowling around Hollow Bastion looking for his nemesis Cloud. Sports a single black wing – it's a big look now.



Final Fantasy Advent Children

Although white-haired psycho Kadaj is the key player in this stunning computer-animated film, he morphs into Sephiroth [who was behind it all along!] for the final epic battle with Cloud.



Key moments



Going slightly mad

Sephiroth is actually a genetic experiment by evil mega-corporation Shinra [who happen to employ him]. When he discovers the truth, he turns into a revenge-hungry madman.



Burning down Nibelheim

After finding out he's a 'monster' Sephiroth torches FF hero Cloud's hometown, then calmly walks through the flames. A bit like Satan.



Snap happy

During FFVII, Cloud goes mad when he discovers a photo that reveals he's also a genetic creation. It's a pic of Sephiroth, Tifa and Zack that proves his memories of the past are false...



Killing Aeris

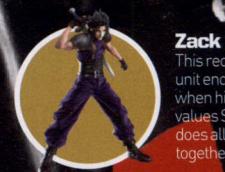
FF fans wept like babies as Sephiroth knifed lead girl Aeris halfway through FFVII. 11 years after it happened, we're pretty much over it.

Friends and foes



Cloud

A constant thorn in Sephiroth's side. This gigantic-sword-wielding blonde thwarts Sephiroth's dastardly plans in FFVII, only to be tormented by his endless rebirths. Serves him right for being such a do-gooding buttlick.



Zack

This recruit into Shinra's elite military unit ends up under Sephiroth's wing when his own mentor goes AWOL. He values Sephiroth's teachings, and does all he can to keep the big guy together during his big discovery.



Aeris

The last remaining Ancient, Aeris is probably the only one who can foil Sephiroth's plan to summon a potentially world-destroying meteorite. Which unfortunately leads to her swift death by his sword. Poongirl.



Genesis

The closest thing Sephiroth has to a friend, he rose through the ranks beside him and works Sephiroth when he rebels against Shinra. Genesis is also a mutant and leads Sephiroth to discover that he is too.

Sephiroth trivia



Sephiroth's name comes from the Jewish teaching of Kabbalah. Here, a 'Sephirot' represents one of the ten aspects of God.



He's usually voiced by George Justice League Superman' Newburn, but Kingdom Hearts has Sephiroth voiced by Lance Bass. From NSYNC. Oh dear.



Sephiroth's confusingly androgynous face has been plastered over all kinds of merch, including plushes, keyrings, lighters, figurines, posters, soft drinks...



FF composer Nobuo Uematsu has said that Sephiroth's epic orchestral theme tune, One Winged Angel, is inspired by Jimi Hendrix's Purple Haze.



Sephiroth's signature sword, the Masamune, has been re-created by plenty of replica weapons companies – to the absolute horror of parents worldwide.



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